

# WOMEN AND THE BIG BUSINESS OF CHOCOLATE

Chocolate is a \$100 billion industry, but most cocoa farmers live on less than \$2 a day. Among them, women in particular are more likely to face poverty, low wages, and discrimination. But there's no reason to give up the chocolate you love. Instead, get the facts—then tell food companies to give growers a fair deal.



## FARMERS, FOOD, AND FAIRNESS

About one in three workers worldwide rely on agriculture to earn a living. More than half of them are women, who are often overrepresented in the lowest-paid jobs. For both women and men, working on or owning a farm is no guarantee of a decent income: ironically, up to 80 percent of the world's chronically hungry people are farmers.

So what can we do to right this wrong? We can start by understanding that food is truly global.

Farmers, companies, and consumers are all interconnected; each of our actions can affect countless others. Take cocoa, the key ingredient in your favorite chocolate bar. Many farmers in the developing world grow food for local markets, but an increasing number cultivate crops like cocoa to sell to multinational companies.

Today, 90 percent of the world's cocoa is grown by some 5.5 million smallholder farmers.

## THE NOT-SO-SWEET FACTS ABOUT COCOA

- Most cocoa farmers and workers live below the poverty line, earning less than \$2 a day.
- Less than 5 percent of the price of a typical chocolate bar goes back to cocoa farmers. The rest goes to the supermarket that sells the candy, plus marketing, transport, storage, and other costs.
- Many cocoa-growing areas have high rates of hunger and malnutrition. A 2007 survey of cocoa farming households in Ondo, Nigeria's top cocoa-producing state, found that 57 percent didn't have access to a sufficient amount of nutritious food.

- While women are integral to the production of commodities like cocoa, tea, and coffee, it is usually men who sell the crops to traders and control the cash received as payment.
- In West Africa, where most of the world's cocoa comes from, women do nearly half of the labor on cocoa farms but own just a quarter of the land. They have fewer economic opportunities and, as workers, typically earn less than men. Cocoa farmers in Nigeria told Oxfam that women are paid \$2 to \$3 for a day's work, while men earn about \$7 a day.
- Although global demand for chocolate is rising, the production of cocoa has slowed significantly owing to a changing climate and an aging workforce. Millions of young people are giving up cocoa farming because of low pay and a lack of opportunities, and established farmers are considering switching to other, more profitable crops.

// We want these conditions to get better. We want men to understand that women can do what men do. ... And I think that with international pressure, things will start to change. //

—Olga Rosine Adou, farmer and cooperative leader from Agboville, Ivory Coast, on the inequalities facing women cocoa growers



## THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1. THE BIGGEST FOOD COMPANIES HAVE GLOBAL REACH.

- Three companies—Mars, Mondelez, and Nestlé—collectively buy more than 30 percent of the world’s cocoa. They are among the 10 biggest food and beverage companies in the world, which together generate revenues of more than \$1.1 billion a day.
- Though these 10 companies employ millions of people in poor countries, they often know very little about the people who grow, process, and sell their products. Few can provide accurate information about where a particular product comes from, who grew it, and under what conditions.

### 2. THESE COMPANIES COULD BE DOING A LOT MORE FOR FARMERS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN.

- Oxfam spent 18 months looking closely at how the 10 biggest food companies report that they do business. Then, we created an easy-to-use scorecard—a “behind the brands” look—comparing and contrasting companies’ policies and commitments.

- All 10 companies need to do a lot more to support farmers, communities, and our planet. The scorecard also revealed major gaps in their policies to protect and promote women’s rights.
- For example, Mars, Mondelez, and Nestlé all need to show more awareness of issues facing women cocoa growers and workers. As of early 2013, Mars (the company behind Snickers and M&M’s) needs to radically improve its efforts to ensure women can achieve equal treatment, rights, and pay.
- To improve conditions for women growers, companies need to “look, listen, and act.” They should look more closely at the way women who grow and produce their products are treated; listen to what women have to say about their working conditions; and act to put policies in place that protect women’s rights and nurture their skills.

### 3. CONSUMERS LIKE YOU CAN CHANGE HOW COMPANIES DO BUSINESS.

Today, consumers are looking closer at company practices and making more-informed choices. Even the biggest companies care what customers think—so when you speak, they listen.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

You don’t need to stop buying your favorite candy. Instead, get the facts about the companies behind the brands you love. Find out what they could be doing to support women cocoa farmers. Then let them know exactly what needs to change.

Send a message now at [oxfamamerica.org/behindthebrands](http://oxfamamerica.org/behindthebrands)

**STAY INFORMED:** We’ll be monitoring companies’ progress on this and other issues. See our Behind the Brands scorecard for the latest updates on how your voice is making a difference: [oxfamamerica.org/behindthebrands](http://oxfamamerica.org/behindthebrands)



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For more information and sources, see Oxfam’s report *Behind the Brands: Food Justice and the “Big 10” Food and Beverage Companies*, available at [oxfamamerica.org](http://oxfamamerica.org)

ABOVE: Felicia Adebawale, right, watches as her daughter Bose Adebawale dries cocoa beans outside their house in Ayetoro-Ijesa, Nigeria. *George Osodi / Panos for Oxfam America* FRONT: Comfort Adeniyi, a cocoa farmer, on her farm in Ayetoro-Ijesa. *George Osodi / Panos for Oxfam America*