



cacao CO-OP PROFILE

Fortaleza del Valle

SMALL FARMER
Grown



(above) Members of Fortaleza participate in a training on how to taste and evaluate chocolate.



Relationship between Equal Exchange and Fortaleza

YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP: since 2010

VOLUMES PURCHASED: 12 MT annually

PROGRAMS: USAID Co-operative Development Program 2012-2015

VISITS: Dary Goodrich: 2011, August 2015; Cristina Liberati: April 2012, October 2013, June and December 2014, August 2015

What makes this co-op special?

Fortaleza del Valle is one of few Fair Trade and Organic certified cacao producer organizations in Ecuador. They place a strong focus on offering a quality product to their customers. The emphasis on quality starts with the genetics of the trees. Ecuador produces 70% of the world's cacao designated as "fine and with aroma", and Fortaleza will only purchase from members the Nacional Arriba variety that falls under this designation. In 2012, we began working with the organization and co-financed a laboratory that allows the staff there to make small batches of chocolate. We also helped them to form a tasting panel that has tasted more than 200 samples to date. This allows Fortaleza to evaluate their product in the way their buyers do, to improve their post-harvest processing, and to recognize the true value of their product. From 2012 to 2014, they were able to increase their quality premiums from \$800 per metric ton above market price to \$1,150. In 2016, they plan to produce chocolate bars for sale on the national market.



(above) Fortaleza's tasting panel evaluates their chocolate.

Co-op Data

CO-OP NAME:	Corporación Fortaleza del Valle
LOCATION:	Calceta, Manabí, Ecuador
FOUNDED IN:	2005
CURRENT GENERAL MANAGER:	Berto Zambrano
CO-OP PRODUCTS:	Cocoa beans
PRODUCT VOLUMES:	596 Metric Tons Per Year
CERTIFICATIONS:	Fair Trade, Organic
WEBSITE:	www.fortalezadelvalle.org

Farmer Data

NUMBER OF MEMBERS:	935 members
AVERAGE PRODUCER AGE:	55 years
GENDER:	781 male members, 154 female members
AVERAGE FARM SIZE:	2.3 hectares
AVERAGE FARM PRODUCTIVITY:	600 kilos of dry cacao per hectare
AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME:	From cacao: \$750/ha of cacao x 2.3 ha = \$1,725 With other sources: \$6,700 Ecuador Minimum Wage: \$354 per month x 12 = \$4,248

FARMER PROFILES & STORIES

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Guadalupe Intriago Mera

"Lupita" and her family manage a 4 hectare farm with just over 3,000 cacao plants. They also harvest banana, orange, lemon, and sapote. They have installed an irrigation system which has helped to increase

the productivity of the plants. In addition, they have chickens and a tilapia pond. Lupita's farm mainly features Ecuador's well-known Nacional Arriba cacao, famed for its fine flavor and floral aromas. Lupita has also served many years on the Board of Directors of the organization.



Cruz Alvarado Arturo

Don Cruz is a member of the FDV Oversight Committee at Fortaleza. He was also selected to participate in the Model Farm Program as part of our USAID CDP project. Don Cruz has three hectares of cacao.

He mainly works the farm by himself but sometimes his son also helps out. In 2012, he harvested 29 quintals of cacao and through participation in the Model Farm program he increased to 38 quintals per hectare. In addition to the cacao, Don Cruz also grows mandarin, banana and coffee, and raises chickens.

What makes our relationship to this co-op special?

The partnership between EE and Fortaleza del Valle over the 3 years of the USAID Co-operative Development Program (CDP) allowed the two organizations to develop a much closer working connection than before.

FROM CRISTINA:

"One of my personal favorite outcomes of our collaboration in quality is the change in fermentation protocol at the Quiroga post-harvest processing center. The Calceta center is the primary post-harvest center for FDV, and Quiroga is secondary. They were using the same protocols for both, with 4 days of fermentation. We visited Quiroga and noted that the elevation and climate varied significantly from Calceta, and



Quiroga post-harvest processing center.

the delivery of beans in some cases is a multi-day process via boats. Through tasting samples in the lab and some experimental trials, the team there established that the quality of the beans from Quiroga would benefit significantly from an additional day of fermentation. After making this change to the processing, the quality of the beans from Quiroga did improve significantly."

Fortaleza del Valle is also the first cacao producer organization in Ecuador to have implemented a member savings program, akin to the patronage program that Equal Exchange's worker-owners participate in. With the help of co-op experts in the US and Ecuador, our USAID CDP project introduced the concepts of member equity to gain member loyalty and capital to help support the growth of their organization. Farmers understood quickly that this savings approach was not just about themselves but about their whole family and their greater community. Right now they save \$0.75 per kilo of cacao delivered in their name in an account at FDV.



*Equal Exchange
products with
cacao from
**FORTALEZA
DEL VALLE:***

