



cacao CO-OP PROFILE

CONACADO



What makes this co-op special?

CONACADO was founded almost 30 years ago. At that time, a few wealthy families dominated the cacao landscape in the Dominican Republic. Farmers had little choice, and little voice, when it came to who



they sold their beans to and the price they received. CONACADO aimed to change that by creating a farmer owned co-operative that valued transparency and quality. Today, with over 9,000 members, its presence extends throughout the Dominican Republic, and it is the largest exporter of organic cacao beans in the world.

In addition to selling beans, they own and operate a processing plant in San Francisco de Macoris, where they produce cocoa powder, cocoa butter, cocoa liquor, and nibs for domestic and international sale. They also have an affiliated credit union where members can take out loans to invest in improvements to their farm. CONACADO's technical team guides farmers through those improvements and also monitors their certifications. They are unique in that technicians there are salaried staff, and often stay in the same communities for several years. Most cocoa co-operatives, if they have technical staff at all, fund those staff through development projects and turnover is high. CONACADO is a leader in its field and the management and members never shy away from an opportunity to innovate.

What makes our relationship to this co-op special?

CONACADO was the first cocoa co-operative that Equal Exchange began working with when a hot cocoa product was introduced in 2006. According to Basilio Almonte, head of their technical team, the two organizations share the same motto – small farmers, big change. He adds, “we don’t see ourselves as a supplier to Equal Exchange, we are allies.” Earlier in the relationship with CONACADO, Equal Exchange responded to a call by the co-op’s leadership to ask Dominican President Fernandez to repeal an illegal, and regressive tax levied unfairly against small farmers, to the benefit of the family-run enterprises.

Co-op Data

CO-OP NAME:	CONACADO
LOCATION:	Dominican Republic
FOUNDED IN:	1988
CURRENT GENERAL MANAGER:	Isidoro de la Rosa
CO-OP PRODUCTS:	Cocoa beans, Cocoa powder, Cocoa butter, Cocoa Liquor, Nibs
PRODUCT VOLUMES:	16,000 MT Cocoa Beans annually
CERTIFICATIONS:	Fair Trade, Organic, Hand in Hand, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ, ISO22000, Kosher
WEBSITE:	www.conacado.com.do

Farmer Data

NUMBER OF MEMBERS:	9,669
AVERAGE PRODUCER AGE:	65
GENDER:	8,493 male members, 1,176 female members
AVERAGE FARM SIZE:	3 hectares
AVERAGE FARM PRODUCTIVITY:	600 kilos of dry cacao per hectare
AVERAGE ANNUAL (NET) INCOME:	\$1,080/ha x 3ha = \$3,240
AVERAGE SALARY:	Cocoa Processing Plant Employee: \$3,200 DR Minimum Wage: \$2,400

Relationship with CONACADO

YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP: since 2006

VOLUMES PURCHASED IN 2016:
60 MT of cocoa powder, 100 MT of beans

PROGRAMS: Always Small Farmer Grown Tree Planting Campaign 2013, USAID Co-operative Development Program 2010-2017

VISITS:

- Chocolate team: annual visits to DR since 2007
- Other staff: Rob Everts, Todd Caspersen, Carly Kadlec, Shawn Seebach, Tyler Hall, Meaghan Holmes, Dave Hernandez, Cali Reed, Yania Peralta, Hope Kolly, Liane Nadeau, Ann Cherin, Karin Picarski, Brian Albert, Kelsie Evans, Esther West, Joaquim Texeira
- Equal Exchange Delegations: 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013
- Visits from DR: Basilio Almonte, Ramón Matías Frías González: 2010



FARMER PROFILES & STORIES



Ramón Matías Frias González

Ramón has been a member of CONACADO for 24 years, and has served in the past on their Board of Directors. You might recognize him, as he is featured on some of our packaging! Equal Exchange was

fortunate to host Ramón in March of 2010. While in New England, he had the opportunity to visit our café in Boston, share his experience as a cacao farmer with customers at local food co-ops, and there was even time for a quick visit to Fenway Park. His takeaway from that visit was that CONACADO needs to continue to produce excellent cacao for clients like Equal Exchange that demand high quality, and that the members of CONACADO have to keep working hard to make that possible.



Glenys Altagracia Rosario Suarez

Glenys supervises the agricultural technician team at CONACADO's Block 7. She is very committed to her team and to the members of CONACADO. She is also a farmer herself, and loves working with

cacao because it is a dynamic crop - economically, socially and environmentally. Through her involvement in Equal Exchange's Cooperative Development Project, including participation in an exchange visit to Honduras, she has honed her professional skills and is proud to say that other organizations are now seeking her expert advice on similar projects. She invites consumers to "keep eating chocolate, because the quality of life of our producers depends on them."



Vlademir Garcia

Vlademir is 27 years old and is the son of a farmer who is part of our Model Farm Project with CONACADO. He is helping his father with the model farm plot after seeing the improvements that have

resulted from their participation in the project. He says that these changes have helped to bring in more income to their family and have made a big difference. In the future, he hopes to incorporate the new practices he has learned throughout the rest of their farm. He dreams about having a truck to help him transport cacao, fertilizer, and other tools, and he hopes to continue doing what he loves: watching plants grow.

As Co-Executive Director Rob Everts notes, "Both of our organizations see our roles as bigger than commercial relationships. We are both challenging the dominance of the large players in our industries and markets as we fight to build enduring supply chains that work for small scale producers and independent businesses."



In 2010, CONACADO became a partner in our USAID Co-operative Development Program (CDP) as well.

CONACADO founding member, Jaime Gomez, became a member of the grant management team and project leader in the Dominican Republic. He and the technical team at CONACADO came to CDP with a clear vision to develop a farm renovation package that their technical team would pilot in two areas and eventually deploy throughout the co-op. CONACADO has also begun to employ Fair Trade premiums to replicate the renovation efforts piloted on 10 model farms. Dominican government representatives have visited these model farms of the project several times, and they decided to use the program as a basis for a similar project with 1,000 farmers with the goal of renovating 10,000 total areas of cacao farms across the country.



Through the collaboration, the cocoa processing plant has also been able to develop quality control and food safety procedures that have allowed them to achieve a prestigious certification called ISO22000. Equal Exchange began purchasing cocoa powder directly from the plant in 2010. Dary Goodrich, Chocolate Products Manager, says "I'm really proud of what we've accomplished together."



Equal Exchange products with cacao from CONACADO:

