

For Immediate Release
April 10, 2009

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MARS, INC. ANNOUNCES SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS FOR COCOA
ILRF and OCA call for stronger commitment to Fair Trade and Organic sourcing

This Wednesday, [Mars, Incorporated announced](#) a commitment to source 100,000 metric tons of cocoa certified by the Rainforest Alliance annually for use in Mars products. The first product to use Rainforest Alliance certified cocoa will be Galaxy Chocolate in the UK and Ireland beginning in 2010. While Mars refers to the commitment as a “milestone” in advancing sustainable cocoa farming, organizations like the International Labor Rights Forum have been pushing Mars to adopt stronger labor standards to end child labor in their cocoa supply chain and to support organic farming for eight years.

Rainforest Alliance standards for cocoa production are not the strongest in terms of sustainability certification programs. However, one important aspect of the standards is that they apply at least to the cooperative level. For years, major chocolate companies have argued that it is impossible to establish a certification program on the farm or cooperative level, but Mars’ announcement shows that it is indeed possible. Rainforest Alliance certification is an important improvement over the “certification” process established by major chocolate companies as part of the Harkin-Engel Protocol, which does not include any labor or environmental standards. Other major US food companies like Kraft have used Rainforest Alliance certified cocoa for years.

Mars’ announcement comes a little over a month after [Cadbury announced](#) that it would seek Fair Trade certification for the top selling chocolate bar in the UK market by the end of this summer. Even before Cadbury announced its commitment to supporting Fair Trade, companies like Divine Chocolate, Equal Exchange and Sweet Earth Organic Chocolates have led the way in embracing ethical and sustainable cocoa sourcing practices. Sixty chocolate companies and organizations have endorsed a statement outlining how the chocolate industry can embrace a more ethical cocoa supply chain titled “Commitment to Ethical Cocoa Sourcing” ([available online here](#)).

Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum, said, “While it is important that Mars is taking a step forward toward sustainable cocoa farming, this recent announcement does not do enough to ensure that workers are not exploited in the company’s global supply chain. We have been calling on chocolate companies to support Fair Trade since 2001 and we encourage Mars, as well as other major US chocolate companies like Hershey, to go further in ensuring that they contribute to higher working and living standards for cocoa farmers.”

Ryan Zinn, Campaigns Coordinator of the Organic Consumers Association, said, “Consumers are demanding ethical and sustainable chocolate with strong labor standards for cocoa farmers. The Organic Consumers Association urges Mars to incorporate certified USDA organic and Fair Trade cocoa into its supply chain.”

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