

# TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE GOURMET AND ZERO- DEFORESTATION COCOA

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IN 2021, KAOKA SIGNED AN INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WITH A BUDGET OF 8.97 MILLION EUROS FOR THE CONSERVATION AND REGENERATION OF ECOSYSTEMS, PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY AND PROMOTION OF AGROECOLOGY IN THE COCOA INDUSTRY IN COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, AND PERU.

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# EDITORIAL



After 3 years of work, we are proud to be the initiators and co-signatories of a public-private partnership for the conservation and regeneration of ecosystems, protection of biodiversity, and promotion of agroecology in the cocoa industry in Peru, Colombia and Ecuador.

As a matter of fact, for 30 years, we have been working in Latin America to establish partnerships with local cocoa producers. Together, we share the same ambition: to produce excellent cocoa using sustainable techniques, in a spirit of fairness, while preserving ecosystems.

But today, the facts are clear: the destruction of primary forests is accelerating and the consequences of this phenomenon on biodiversity are extremely serious. While some actors are content with a pledge to replant trees, we do not subscribe to this «tree-washing» approach, and we believe that it is urgent to preserve and restore these primary forests and their ecosystems.

Faced with the magnitude of the challenge and its ecological, economic, and social complexity, it was essential for a small family business like ours to join forces with international expert partners. For this reason, this summer we signed a unique partnership with the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), World Agroforestry (ICRAF) and the NGO Conservation International. In this collaboration, each partner, a recognized specialist in its field, will contribute its specific skills and expertise.

An exemplary approach to public-private cooperation, our project is set to be a laboratory for experimenting with the revolution that we must lead. We aim to prove its effectiveness and ability to be scaled out to help protect unique forest ecosystems and carbon reservoirs that are essential to decelerating climate change.

Co-funded by Kaoka and FFEM\*, this €8.97 million project is fully consistent with the National Strategy to Combat Imported Deforestation (SNDI), which aims to put an end to the import of forest or agricultural products, including cocoa, that contribute to deforestation. It is, therefore, for the survival of the sector and the future of our producer partners that we renew our commitment today.

\* French Facility for Global Environment

**Guy Deberdt,**  
Director General

**Sébastien Balmisse,**  
Director, Sectors and Quality – RSE Director

**IT IS, THEREFORE, FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE SECTOR AND THE FUTURE OF OUR PRODUCER PARTNERS THAT WE RENEW OUR COMMITMENT TODAY.**



“OUR PROJECT FOR RENEWING COCOA PLANTATIONS THROUGH AGROECOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA COMBINES PRIVATE AND PUBLIC RESEARCH TO BUILD A COCOA VALUE CHAIN THAT CONTRIBUTES TO ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION AND REGENERATION.»

Sébastien Balmisse, Director, Sectors and Quality – RSE Director



# TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE GOURMET AND ZERO-DEFORESTATION COCOA



**F**or Kaoka, a family-owned French business specialized in organic fair-trade chocolate, sustainable excellence and environmental protection are not words to be used lightly. In fact, they should be much more than a mere thought. Since its establishment 30 years ago, Kaoka’s commitment to sustainability and environmental protection has been at the forefront of all of its activities. Kaoka is now adding value to its original approach by initiating an ambitious ecosystem preservation and regeneration project and promoting agroecological systems in the cocoa industry in Peru, Colombia and Ecuador.

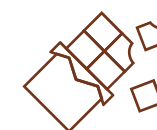
To this end, Kaoka is collaborating with the Alliance of Bioersity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), and World Agroforestry (ICRAF), two CGIAR

research centers, as well as with an international NGO specializing in the preservation of natural resources (Conservation International) and local cocoa farmers’ associations. Launched in July 2021, the project is co-financed by the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM), Kaoka, and the project partners.

Together, they will contribute to creating a sustainable cocoa value chain and, most of all, one that is fully tai-

lored to the specific challenges linked to fighting deforestation, restoring soil, preserving biodiversity, and developing the economy in these countries. The project seeks to promote a “cocoa of excellence” for Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, three neighboring countries for which cocoa is a symbol of their shared history and riches in terms of both culture and biodiversity.

*\*CIAT will intervene on behalf of Alliance Bioersity International- CIAT.*

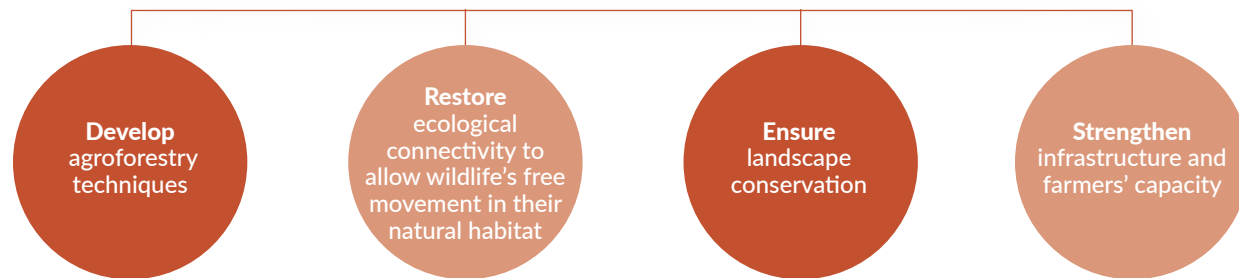


**ZOOM IN ON A COCOA OF EXCELLENCE**  
The label “cocoa of excellence” simultaneously introduces a sense of fine aromatic quality and respect for environmental, social, and economic fair-trade organic sustainability. The label thus abides by organic and fair-trade certification requirements.



# THE COCOA PLANTATION REGENERATION PROJECT THROUGH AGROECOLOGY IN A NUTSHELL

## 4 objectives



Soutenu par



The project is supported by the Ministry of Ecological Transition

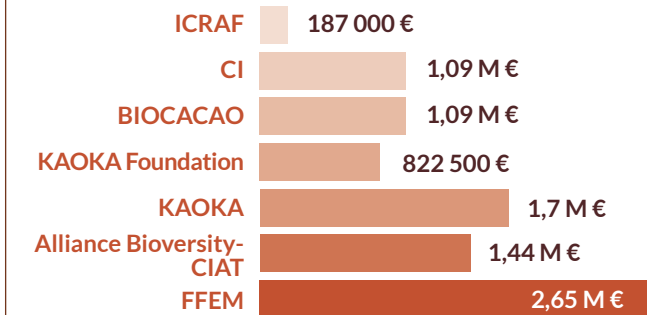


Project duration

**4 years**

Launch in July 2021 with a budget of 8.97 million euros

### Funding



## PROJECT PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

### PROJECT COORDINATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

#### KAOKA, FRENCH COMPANY, AROMATIC AND ORGANIC FAIR-TRADE COCOA SPECIALIST

**Expertise :** mastery of the cocoa industry and cocoa's organoleptic profiles.

**Its role within the project:** provide expertise in a range of fields related to cocoa production, transformation, and commercialization. Kaoka will co-finance the project and will be considered as a technical partner for the coordination, monitoring, and implementation of activities.

**Kaoka will co-chair the steering committee with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT.**

#### ALLIANCE OF BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL AND CIAT, BIODIVERSITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND NUTRITION RESEARCH SPECIALISTS

**Expertise :** deliver research-based solutions that address the global crises of malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. With novel partnerships, the Alliance generates evidence and mainstreams innovations to transform food

systems and landscapes so that they sustain the planet, drive prosperity, and nourish people in a climate crisis.

**Its role within the project:** carry out mapping activities, identify native varieties, select crop-specific equipment for the implementation of grafts and nurseries, and co-design conservation plans. CIAT will sign an agreement with FFEM and will be in charge of project coordination and the distribution of funding allocations to local partners.

**CIAT will co-chair the steering committee with Kaoka.**

#### WORLD AGROFORESTRY (ICRAF), AGROFORESTRY RESEARCH SPECIALISTS

**Expertise :** develop research and provide scientific evidence on the benefits of trees for people and the environment.

**Its role within the project:** implement participatory methods to assess indigenous communities' knowledge on agroforestry systems to increase their knowledge base through tailored approaches.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### KAOKA FOUNDATION (ECUADOR)

**Expertise :** renew cocoa plantations under the agroforestry system, manage deforestation monitoring systems, and sign individual and/or collective conservation agreements with local farmers.

Kaoka Foundation is a local NGO that receives funding from FFEM and co-finances projects through cocoa fair-trade premiums paid by Kaoka.

**Note: even though both entities share the same name, Kaoka Foundation is independent from Kaoka.**

#### BIOCOCOA (PERU)

Restore degraded soil and promote planting of aromatic cocoa under agroforestry systems, sign individual and/or collective conservation agreements with local farmers, and manage deforestation monitoring systems.

Biococoa is a local NGO that receives funding from FFEM and co-finances projects through cocoa fair-trade premiums paid by Kaoka.

#### CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL (COLOMBIA)

implement environmental preservation programs and restore natural resources, promote planting of cocoa under agroforestry systems, sign individual and/or collective conservation agreements with local farmers, manage deforestation monitoring systems, and promote commercial agreements with sales representatives from the cocoa of excellence sector.



### COCOA FARMERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

#### COLPA DE LOROS COOPERATIVE IN PERU

Peru is the world's top certified organic and fair-trade cocoa-producing country.

#### PARTNER COOPERATIVES IN ECUADOR

Ecuador was the first country in the world to produce aromatic fine cocoa and it supplies 60% of the global market in this specific segment.

#### PARTNER COOPERATIVE IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, cocoa is predominantly produced for domestic consumption.



The project will aim to establish new profitable commercial opportunities.

### FUNDING PARTNERS

#### FFEM (FRENCH FACILITY FOR GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT)

**Expertise :** preservation of the environment and sustainable social and economic development in developing and emerging countries.

**Its role within the project:** contribute with funding to the project through grants allocated to CIAT, which will be eventually disbursed to the implementing partners.





# FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE COCOA FARMING METHODS TO PRESERVE UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY

Since the 1990s in Latin America, the expansion of arable land has led to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. This deforestation is a crucial and complex climate change and biodiversity concern. It has led to soil depletion, destruction of biodiversity, and an unprecedented decline in farmers' revenue. The cocoa tree agroecology regeneration project spearheaded by Kaoka aims to bring value back to cocoa farming: a cocoa of excellence that is economically viable and sustainably produced without deforestation.

**T**he situation is alarming in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Since the 1990s, the rapid expansion of agricultural lands is one of the main drivers of destruction of local forest ecosystems. Intensive production methods, in particular those of coca, drove farmers to deforest new areas for production. This phenomenon is called «the pioneer front» and has largely accelerated deforestation. The conversion of forest areas into crop lands has also led to the fragmentation of wildlife's natural habitats and degradation of biodiversity and ecosystems. The productivity of depleted lands has decreased, thus making difficult to produce staple crops and ensure sufficient income for the local populations. Kaoka's project to regenerate cocoa plantations using an agroecological approach provides concrete and expert solutions to these challenges.



**ZOOM IN... ON ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY**  
Ecological connectivity seeks to bridge together all the different natural areas in order to allow animals and plants to move freely, all the while restoring ecological continuity. Indeed, the loss of natural habitats and their fragmentation is a major driver of biodiversity erosion.



# CONCRETE SOLUTIONS TO PRESERVE UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY

## DEVELOP AGROFORESTRY

Turning to agroforestry techniques in cocoa farming not only diminishes the need for farming inputs but also allows farmers to combine food crops (fruit trees, plantains, pepper plants, etc.) and forest tree species with cocoa trees. This creates a virtuous circle that guarantees immediate and long-term revenue for farmers, all the while restoring soil fertility. This approach guarantees the sustainability of cocoa farming, while limiting the expansion of agricultural land into forests (see infographic on agroforestry on p. 17). The agroforestry systems proposed within the framework of this project will be tailor-made for local ecosystems as well as for farmers' needs and goals.

1



2



4



3



## STRENGTHEN PRODUCTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND FARMERS' CAPACITY

This project seeks to improve the entire cocoa supply chain, from its cultivation and to its final commercialization. The technical support farmers will receive will allow them to expand and enhance their facilities for fermentation and drying of cocoa beans.

With the support of Kaoka, research work will be carried out to better control the fermentation process.

Farmers will also benefit from training aimed at strengthening their skills for implementing sustainable agricultural practices.

## REESTABLISH ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY

In response to the destruction of forests, the different species that inhabit them are modifying their natural habitat. This is a particularly concerning issue for the Amazon portion of the project, both in Peru and in Colombia, a place with a great wealth of biodiversity, and its preservation is essential. By replanting hedges, shade trees, etc., the project offers a way for the different species to move from one forest area to another and rebuild their natural living environment. Restoring ecological connectivity therefore helps to preserve biodiversity endangered by previous deforestation practices.

## ENSURE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Primary forests contain massive quantities of carbon dioxide and their destruction triggers significant greenhouse gas emissions, thus accelerating climate change.

As a part of this project, tools for impact assessment and monitoring of agricultural production areas will be developed. Through conservation agreements, farmers and farmer organizations will commit to protecting and promoting and valuing their regions' forests and limiting the expansion of their farming operations.

Restoring old plantations using agroforestry increases on-farm profitability by diversifying the crops and improving land productivity.

Furthermore, the project will contribute to restoring areas with severely degraded soils (old grazing areas) and putting these areas back into productive use. These two combined effects will ensure that cocoa farming does not lead to deforestation.



## KEY MESSAGE

**Fighting deforestation, conserving ecosystems, restoring degraded natural landscapes, and sustainably managing natural resources: all of these are shared challenges for Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador.**

These challenges have been exacerbated by intensive farming practices since the 1990s. The project aims to foster the cultivation of aromatic cocoa under agroforestry systems and to build a profitable business model to avoid the progression of deforestation and to guarantee sustainable income for farmers.

Furthermore, the project is also aligned with the different agreements and government programs of all three countries, as well as with the National Strategy against Imported Deforestation (SNDI) supported by the French government





## 3 QUESTIONS FOR...



### Sébastien Balmisse

DIRECTOR, SECTORS AND QUALITY – RSE  
DIRECTOR, AND PROJECT LEADER AT KAOKA



**Kaoka is already committed to an ethical and sustainable approach toward local cocoa farmers: What else does the plantation regeneration project offer to farmers?**

Indeed, Kaoka's commitment is not recent, and this project is not in any way opportunistic. Today, we understand that there is an urgent need for action against deforestation and the damage that it entails, particularly in Peru. With this project, we intend to support cocoa producers from crop cultivation to the development of commercial sectors, drawing on the expertise of each of the project partners. The project will accelerate the implementation of on-farm sustainable techniques and enhanced agricultural practices in favor of biodiversity and forest ecosystems.

**What is the particular strength of this project?**

The strength of this project lies within the convergence of expertise from a diverse group of actors coming from the research field, the private sector, and local communities. Thanks to this unprecedented partnership, we will foster the sharing of skills and knowledge among farmers in these three countries,

particularly in the field of preservation and regeneration of ecosystems, restoration agriculture, and quality control systems. These methods

already exist, but they are poorly valued and farmers should start to demonstrate interest. We prioritize the preservation of primary forests because planting trees is not enough to compensate for the negative effects stemming from the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

**What are your expectations with this project?**

Our challenge is concrete: restore soil, renovate old cocoa plantations, stabilize cultivated areas by boosting yield, and provide commercial opportunities that are formalized by means of a contract and thus create a cocoa industry that both generates income and regenerates natural resources. This is a life-size laboratory that allows us to test a toolbox of techniques and observe the results in order to offer proof of their effectiveness and disseminate them more broadly.



## 5 QUESTIONS FOR...



### Yovita Ivanova

PROJECT COORDINATOR  
AT THE ALLIANCE OF BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL AND CIAT



#### Can you please describe the activities of the Alliance Bioversity-CIAT?

We are implementing important projects related to cocoa in Peru and in other Latin American countries, focusing our research on the impact of climate change. In particular, we work on sustainable production landscapes, deforestation-free value chains and participatory approaches for the design of agroforestry systems and sustainable business models.

#### What are your priority actions in the field?

Notre première action consiste... Our first action is the mapping of all the priority conservation and ecological connectivity areas, which will help us to understand the current land use in the intervention areas of the different cocoa cooperatives. Subsequently, we will work with our local partners in Ecuador and Peru to factor in their criteria and challenges. Ultimately, we will be able to offer the cooperatives and partner farmers a definition of the conservation, ecological connectivity, and active restoration areas. We will start working with the NGO BioCacao, an organization that

operates in the Ucayali region in Peru, to develop a methodology that we will in turn be able to scale out with the Kaoka Foundation in Ecuador.

#### Can you give us an example of a concrete action that your organization will be undertaking?

Throughout the first year of the project, we will lead a series of co-construction workshops with farmers from the partner Peruvian cooperative in order to develop conservation plans. Together, over the course of these workshops, we will define the practices they will adopt on their farms. As part of this participatory approach, we will share knowledge and experience, thus enriching their practices in agroforestry systems, which will be reinforced by ICRAF, and low-emission agricultural practices proposed by our technical team.

#### How are you going to monitor the actions planned to fight deforestation and contribute to the project objectives in the three countries: Perú, Ecuador and Colombia?

Firstly, based on the early mapping of the different landscapes, we will be able to share with the cooperatives and their member

partners a clear projection of the areas apt for production activities and those areas needed for enabling ecological connectivity. Secondly, we will provide the cooperatives with tailor-made tools for them to prevent deforestation and ensure proper monitoring of their intervention areas.

#### What human and technical resources will be deployed to fulfill the project goals?

Our multidisciplinary team will provide technical support and lead the activities in the field, administrative follow-up, and project management. The team is comprised of a geographic information system specialist who analyzes and identifies areas and conservation corridors, an expert in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions control, a participatory process facilitation specialist, and a soil analysis specialist.



Through the project, Kaoka aims to restore

## 200 ha

of degraded soil in Peru to establish cacao plantations in agroforestry.

## 3 QUESTIONS FOR...



### Ernesto Parra y Guerra

COLPA DE LOROS COOPERATIVE DIRECTOR IN PERU

#### Can you please describe your cooperative and status in Peru?

When we started working with Kaoka in 2015, we were the first cooperative that produced and sold aromatic cocoa in Peru. This was a novel initiative in Peru, a country where the common type of cocoa, the CCN51 or "forastero" type, was widely produced. Nowadays, we are among the top 20 exporters of cocoa in the country, and our purchasing prices are among the highest in Peru. We counted 35 members in our cooperative in the beginning; today, we are 515: we have grown rapidly.

#### Why did you decide to participate in this cocoa plantation rehabilitation project?

We have developed a unique model that addresses deforestation challenges, while integrating agroforestry systems and developing quality cocoa. But these efforts require a consistent commitment from the cooperative farmers. New techniques need to be implemented, in particular for restoring degraded soils

and ecological corridors. This project will provide significant support to help us further consolidate our methods and improve farmers' livelihoods.

#### What specific actions are you going to take?

We are going to start by recovering those degraded soils that have been abandoned by farmers, through tree planting and agroforestry. Another priority is the restoration of ecological corridors that were destroyed along with a part of the Amazon rainforest, particularly to plant coca in the past. We have already launched a pilot to demonstrate the feasibility of this project and influence other farmers to adopt these techniques. Finally, this project will enable us to strengthen our infrastructure for processing cocoa beans, which are centralized within our cooperative.



## FFEM'S POINT OF VIEW

“ THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUSTAINABLE COCOA FARMING AREAS IN COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, AND PERU IS AN EXEMPLARY DEMONSTRATION OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE AT THE SUBNATIONAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, IN PARTICULAR BECAUSE IT CAN BE SCALED OUT. ANOTHER IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE PROJECT: THE COMMUNITIES ARE STAKEHOLDERS OF THIS PROJECT, WHICH DIRECTLY RESPONDS TO THE PREVAILING SOCIO-ECONOMIC PATTERNS OF THE REGION THAT GUARANTEE ITS ADOPTION FROM THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL POINT OF VIEW. »

Anaëlle Cado, Project Manager, FFEM



# DIFFERENTIATED STRATEGIES

In the Andean region, cocoa is a crop of economic and social importance. Cocoa is mainly produced by small to medium family farms, comprising hundreds of thousands of farmers. Production volumes have risen significantly in response to the ever-growing demand on national and international markets. However, environmental, social, and economic concerns are not the same in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Therefore, this project implemented by Kaoka takes into account site-specific challenges.



## HOW DOES AGROFORESTRY WORK?

Cocoa trees grow naturally under shade trees. For this reason, agroforestry incorporates fruit trees and forest trees in cocoa plantations. This ancestral system fosters greater biological diversity and the formation a substrate suitable for increased crop performance. This shading system provides a microclimate, mitigates droughts and reduces disease outbreaks. By intensifying production in the same cultivated areas, and by restoring degraded soils (damaged by grazing, for example), the forest is no longer negatively affected by the expansion of crop areas. In the context of climate change, agroforestry contributes to limiting GHG emissions and restoring soil to ensure the plantation sustainability. Agroforestry guarantees increased crop yield and diversified income sources for farmers.

### COLPA DE LOROS COOPERATIVE IN PERU

#### Site-specific challenges:

- Replace coca production
- Preserve forest areas and fragile ecosystems in the region
- Identify cocoa landraces with the aim to reestablish and leverage their production

#### The project's objectives:

- Restore 200 hectares of degraded soil
- Establish aromatic cocoa varieties using agroforestry systems on restored soil
- Sign collective and individual conservation agreements
- Promote quality to produce organic and fair-trade gourmet cocoa
- Adopt deforestation monitoring systems

### PARTNER COOPERATIVES IN ECUADOR

#### Site-specific challenges:

- No pioneer fronts, but a desire for forest preservation
- Re-establish ecological connectivity
- Renovate or replace aging cocoa trees

#### The project's objectives:

- Renovate 300 hectares of domestic cocoa fields using the agroforestry system
- Sign collective and individual conservation agreements
- Implement a research and development program on cocoa fermentation management
- Promote quality to produce organic and fair-trade gourmet cocoa
- Adopt deforestation monitoring systems

### CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL IN COLOMBIA

#### Site-specific challenges:

- Develop more aromatic cocoa varieties
- Promote exports to increase farmers' income

#### The project's objectives:

- Plant 100 hectares to cocoa under the agroforestry system
- Sign collective and individual conservation agreements
- Support the structuring of a cocoa of excellence chain
- Promote commercial agreements for the cocoa of excellence sector
- Foster production of large volumes of organic and fair-trade cocoa of excellence
- Enable adoption of deforestation monitoring systems

## THE AGROFORESTRY MODEL DEVELOPED BY KAOKA IS COMPRISED OF FOUR LAYERS, EACH ONE WITH A VERY SPECIFIC ROLE:

The top layer (trees 25-35 meters high) creates permanent controlled shading that protects cocoa from climatic stresses and regenerates soil organic matter.

The middle layer (trees 9-24 meters high) mainly includes fruit trees. They provide farmers with additional income and harbor a wealth of biodiversity.

The bottom layer (trees 1-8 meters high) is where cocoa trees are located, together with plantain, papaya and pepper trees.

Layer zero is made up of legumes, which enrich soil and provide as well additional income for farmers.







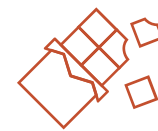
# A PROJECT CONSISTENT WITH KAOKA'S HISTORICAL COMMITMENT

Commitment to organic production has been in Kaoka's blueprint since its very inception. Founded in 1993 by André Deberdt, an organic chocolate pioneer, this family-owned French business is now run by his two children, Guy and Maria Deberdt. Driven by a militant engagement that has remained unchanged for almost 30 years, Kaoka has designed a model that is respectful of the environment and humankind, with the aim to offer an organic and ethical chocolate that is accessible to everyone. This model essentially relies on integrated sectors, built in partnership with local farmers. This makes Kaoka a "one-of-a-kind" company in the current market.

## GENERAL PROFILE



Family-owned French business, specialist in organic and ethical chocolate, located in Carpentras



### 1991

André Deberdt commercialized that year one of the first organic cocoa bars, a chocolate made with 70% cocoa with no added cocoa butter.

## KAOKA TODAY



**17**  
employees



The Kaoka products are commercialized in **19** countries from all over the world



**41 million**  
euros in sales



The Kaoka chocolate products are manufactured in France



**324,740 trees** planted jointly with our partner farmers as part of agroforestry and renovation programs implemented on 820 ha of plantations since 2018



**4,824**  
partner farmers



**242 ha** planted in agroforestry



**30 references** of chocolate bars  
18 for tasting, 2 «simply», 4 «gourmandes», 3 «gourmet», 3 «desserts»



**1,500 ha** of plantations restored since 2010



**22 references** of couverture chocolate, drops, chocolate sticks, powders and cocoa butter for professionals






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