

Child labour and chocolate

About 70% of the cocoa beans used to make chocolate around the world come from West Africa, with Ivory Coast (Cote D'Ivoire) and Ghana among the biggest producers.

The cocoa industry is built on the labour of poor farmers who grow the beans on small plots of land and sell their harvests to local middlemen. Harvesting cocoa is back-breaking work and cocoa prices have been declining in recent years. To keep costs down, farmers use their children and other family members to help.



Today there are up to 280,000 children working on cocoa farms in Ivory Coast and Ghana. Some of these cocoa children carry heavy loads, and work with fire, chemicals and knives, with little or no protection. Many of them have no chance of going to school.

Exposing the truth

Over the last 10 years, the international media has begun to expose the use of child labour in the cocoa industry. Some media reports have claimed that in the worst cases, children are being forced to work 80-100 hours a week.

What's the chocolate industry doing about it?

Before these media claims were made, few – if any – of the big chocolate manufacturers had taken steps to address child labour in the cocoa industry. In September 2001, members of the chocolate industry signed a voluntary agreement to make sure that cocoa production was free of the worst forms of child labour in Ivory Coast and Ghana. This process was meant to be complete by July 2005. They failed to meet this deadline. Industry has now been given an extension until July 2008.

What are the solutions?

Ending child labour in cocoa farms is not simple and it will take time. Solutions will be found by working at many levels:

1. **Big chocolate manufacturers and exporters** bear a lot of the responsibility in tackling this issue. They need to:
 - examine their supply chains so that the products we buy are free of child labour- and guarantee farmers a fair price for their cocoa
 - publicly outline a Plan of Action to make sure their products are free of child labour.
2. **Retailers** should stock ethical chocolate (i.e. chocolate that is made from cocoa, that is picked without the worst forms of child labour, and that also guarantees a fair price for the farmer). Retailers should communicate to manufacturers that the Australian public will not tolerate buying goods made by exploiting children.
3. **You and I should not** boycott our favourite chocolates, since this only hurts poor farming families even more. Instead, we should use our voices to demand ethical chocolate from manufacturers, and buy ethical Fair Trade chocolate.



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Governments should protect children from work that is dangerous, or that might harm their health or their education. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 32)

Did you know?

Australians are the world's fourth greatest consumers of chocolate, gobbling down an average 10 Easter eggs and between nine and 11 kilograms of chocolate per person a year. But in the Ivory Coast, farmers earn less for a kilogram of cocoa beans than we pay for a Snickers bar.