

ESCO

Exporter of
Organic Cocoa and Vanilla in Uganda

ESCO Ltd. is a company with a long history in Uganda, since 1956 under the name Edm. Schluter & Co. (Uganda) Limited. The company started with export of washed Robusta coffee. ESCO moved to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1969.

It re-opened as ESCO Uganda in 1994, trading in cocoa and vanilla in Bundibugyo district. Currently it is one of the major buyers in the district. Both, cocoa and vanilla are exported as certified organic products.

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Supported by the Sida programme
– **EPOPA** – www.epopa.info
Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa

Cocoa

(Theobroma cacao)

Cocoa is a small tree that grows in the hot and humid tropics. It grows mainly on low altitudes (up to 800 meters). Naturally, cocoa grows under shade trees. It takes 5 to 6 months from flowering to ripening of the pods. Once ripe the pods change colour into yellow, purple or green/purple, depending on the variety, and fall off the tree. Each pod contains 20-60 beans. Beans from unripe pods give poor fermentation, over-ripe beans may germinate in the pod. The fermentation takes 6-7 days. During the fermentation there is a development of aroma and flavour. After the fermentation process the beans are washed and dried in the sun.

The quality of the beans is judged by:

- Colour and flavour
- Size and appearance
- Lack of moulds

Vanilla

(Vanilla fragans)

Vanilla is a perennial vine that grows on supporting trees, often leguminous trees. These trees provide the necessary shade. In Bundibugyo, Vanilla is intercropped with cocoa. It grows best in hot and moist climates. It needs an evenly distributed rainfall with two drier months, to stimulate flowering.

The vines must be trained for easy pollination and harvesting. The crop is labour intensive because the pollination is done by hand. The pods are ready for harvest when the tips have turned yellow. The number of pods per plant is between 50-150. After harvesting the pods are brought to a curing centre. Curing reduces the weight by 7 times.

Vanilla is used as a flavouring ingredient in foods and cosmetics. In medicine, it is used as a nerve stimulant.



A Win-Win Project

ESCO participate in the EPOPA project to enhance their export of organic Vanilla and Cocoa from the Bundibugyo district, in the very east of Uganda. The project is a restart of the organic project which was abandoned in mid 1998 due to rebel insecurity.

Target group

The target group are the farmers who have returned to their own fields after the deplorable conditions in the refugee camps. The number of farmers involved in the project will increase to 2,500 by the end of 2004.

Expected results by the end of 2004

- Export of 300 tons of certified organic cocoa and 3,500 kilos of cured organic vanilla from the district.
- Increase to 2,500 registered farmers producing certified organic produce.
- Organic farmers realise a 33% higher income than conventional farmers due to a premium price for the organic and improved quality of the produce, and an increase in their production.



EXPORT PROMOTION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS FROM AFRICA

EPOPA – Development through Organic Trade

Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) is a programme created by the Swedish international Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in 1994. The programme has projects present in Uganda and Tanzania.

The EPOPA programme aims to give African smallholder farmers better conditions through developing the exports of organic products from Africa. The rural communities, thus the farmers, get a premium price for their crop, they get a more transparent price setting from the exporter who buys more directly and they are paid cash in hand.

Participating countries are given the opportunity to increase and diversify their exports, while at the same time expose the agricultural sector to innovative and environmentally sound farming techniques.

The programme has since it started in 1994 proven to be a valid instrument for African exporters to improve their business and for thousands of farmers to improve their livelihood.

The execution of the EPOPA Programme is subcontracted to a consortium of two consultancies, AgroEco from the Netherlands and GroLink from Sweden. Both consultancies have great experience of working with international organic production issues worldwide.

More information

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