

Sticky Fingers, Helping Hands

by ReadWorks



Who doesn't enjoy a chocolate bar?

Okay, maybe not everyone loves chocolate, but a lot of people do. No matter the vehicle-ice cream, cake, as a beverage, or simply in a candy bar-chocolate is enjoyed by millions of Americans. It's readily available, too; all you have to do for a taste is visit a corner market or a drug store, and you'll find a shelf of various chocolate bars waiting.

A lot goes into a chocolate bar, though, and ultimately, its origins trace back further than the grocery store checkout line. Your favorite Halloween candy has roots even deeper than the company that manufactured it. The next time you get to indulge, take a look at the candy wrapper. What's the most important ingredient in a chocolate bar, the one that makes chocolate...well, chocolaty? It's cocoa.

The origins of that corner-store chocolate bar start in fields along the Equator, in countries in South America, Africa, and South Asia. Cocoa comes from the seeds of cacao trees, which thrive in hot, humid climates. This is why most of the world's supply comes from places like Ghana or Nigeria in West Africa. Some cocoa is harvested in countries like Brazil, near the cacao tree's original habitat.

Chocolate farming may sound like a dream job, but unfortunately, the reality of life on a cocoa

farm is less than idyllic. Cocoa farms are usually located in small villages in remote areas of countries that are still developing a lot of the luxuries taken for granted by people who live in first world countries: running water, reliable electricity, accessible education, and so on.

The demand for chocolate throughout the world is high, so farmers work extremely hard to pick cocoa pods. The average workday hours an American may be used to do not apply on these farms-workers don't get scheduled breaks or eight-hour shifts. Laws restricting child labor don't apply here, either. Some cocoa farms use slave labor, buying and selling people as young as children to work long days in dangerous conditions.

Additionally, many of these cocoa farmers aren't making much money, even though the world population loves its chocolate! Sometimes, greedy middlemen-a term for the marketers and salespeople who buy cocoa pods from farmers and sell them to chocolate makers around the world-buy for very little and sell for a much higher price. This means the traders are the ones making money, instead of the farmers.

As people involved in the global trade of cocoa began to find out about the slavery, child exploitation, and unsafe conditions on cocoa farms, they started to demand change. National and international regulations emerged to help regulate the labor and trade of other crops, such as coffee and tea. Cocoa joined the list of commodities that could be "fair trade."

Fair trade is a term that applies to anything farmed or made and traded, usually from small communities in developing countries to bigger communities with first world economies. The fair trade movement aims to fix the ugly scenarios on places like cocoa farms: lots of hard work, no access to medicine, not enough food, and definitely no fair pay.

To be certified as a fair trade product, a farm must adhere to some important rules. First of all, farming practices must be earth-friendly. Sustainability is a big issue for farmers worldwide, and fair trade organizations take it seriously. If a farm can't treat the land well, will it also treat its workers poorly?

Then, the concept of fair trade requires living and work conditions for laborers that are safe and clean. Fair trade certified operations promise better lives for the people doing the work. Fair trade organizations also prohibit the use of child labor and fight back against slave trafficking.

Finally (and this is where the "fair" part of fair trade really comes in), fairly traded products typically sell at higher prices to consumers so that the producers-the cocoa farmers-are getting paid a fair amount, often designated by the country's minimum wage.

Becoming fair trade certified is a process, and certification is sometimes expensive. However,

once an operation is fair trade certified, the farmers start to earn more money, as their products sell at a higher price. With increased profits, working conditions will also improve.

How can you tell the difference between fair trade chocolate and something that isn't? Look at the label on the candy you're about to enjoy. If there's a symbol on it that reads "Fair Trade Certified," you'll know that the cocoa in your chocolate bar didn't come from a farm that hurts its workers-and that's definitely something sweet.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Which ingredient makes a chocolate bar taste chocolaty?

- A. sugar
- B. butter
- C. cocoa
- D. milk

2. The problem explained in the passage is that cocoa farmers worked in poor conditions for very low pay. What was the solution?

- A. Cocoa became a fair trade product, which helped farmers to be paid more.
- B. Cocoa farmers formed a union to petition their governments for better pay.
- C. Cocoa farmers stopped harvesting cocoa until their wages were raised.
- D. Cocoa farmers got used to the poor working conditions and accepted them.

3. Some cocoa farms use unethical methods to harvest cocoa. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A. "Chocolate farming may sound like a dream job, but unfortunately, the reality of life on a cocoa farm is less than idyllic."
- B. "Cocoa farms are usually located in small villages in remote areas of countries that are still developing a lot of the luxuries taken for granted by people who live in first world countries."
- C. "Some cocoa farms use slave labor, buying and selling people as young as children to work long days in dangerous conditions."
- D. "The average workday hours an American may be used to do not apply on these farms-workers don't get scheduled breaks or eight-hour shifts."

4. Read the following sentences: "As people involved in the global trade of cocoa began to find out about the slavery, child exploitation, and unsafe conditions on cocoa farms, they started to demand change." Based on this information, what conclusion can you make?

- A. People in the cocoa trade already knew about the use of slavery on cocoa farms.
- B. People did not agree with the use of slavery or child labor on cocoa farms.
- C. People wanted to change the unsafe conditions on cocoa farms, but didn't care about slavery.
- D. People wanted to end child exploitation on cocoa farms, but not unsafe conditions.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A. the development of fair trade cocoa
- B. how chocolate is made from cocoa pods
- C. the process of becoming fair trade certified
- D. slavery and child labor on cocoa farms in Africa

6. Read the following sentences: "A lot goes into a chocolate bar, though, and ultimately, its **origins** trace back further than the grocery store checkout line. Your favorite Halloween candy has roots even deeper than the company that manufactured it."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**origins**" mean?

- A. a company that makes chocolate
- B. the process of making something
- C. transporting goods between two places
- D. beginnings, the source of something

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

There is a high demand for chocolate worldwide, _____ many cocoa farmers do not make much money due to greedy middlemen.

- A. so
- B. yet
- C. after
- D. namely

8. What does the fair trade movement aim to fix?

9. Explain the rules a farm must adhere to in order to be certified as fair trade.

10. Explain how the fair trade movement helps improve the lives of cocoa farmers. Support your answer using information from the passage.
