

ABOUT THE PHILIPPINE CACAO

Theobroma cacao, the scientific name of Cacao, literally translates as “food of the gods” in Greek. It is grown mainly for its seeds known as the cocoa beans which are used to make cocoa mass, cocoa powder and chocolate.¹

Cacao is the main ingredient in chocolate production and there is no other crop or product that can substitute for it, in as far as chocolate production is concerned. There are six (6) intermediate products that can be derived from cacao beans: cocoa nibs, cocoa liquor (*tablea*), cocoa cake, cocoa butter, cocoa powder and chocolate confectionary blocks, most all of which are produced by the Philippines.



Photo credit: TableaBatirol's website.

The Philippine *tablea* is defined as roasted, ground and molded nibs of fermented pure (100%) cacao beans without added ingredients and additives. It is also a cocoa mass and cocoa liquor made from cacao beans that are fermented, dried, roasted, ground then molded into blocks, balls, discs, or tablets.

It is traditionally used in the Philippines to make a hot chocolate beverage using a wooden mixing implement or stirrer. The Cacao Industry Development Association of Mindanao estimated that around 2,000 tons of cacao beans is processed into *tablea* annually.²

The market opportunities for *tablea* and cocoa products is growing, as there is an increasing number of cafes and restaurants offering chocolate drinks. Moreover, the trend towards wellness and a healthy lifestyle is seen as another opportunity for cocoa, as it is being positioned and marketed as a health food given its natural contents and health benefits. It is projected that by 2020, there is an additional one million tons of cacao needed to meet global demand, while an additional 30,000 tons, to meet local demand. As such, cacao growers and cocoa manufacturers in the country are well-positioned to translate these market opportunities into a profitable reality.³



Photo from DTI-Policy Brief

¹ Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry, 2017-2022 Philippine Cacao Industry Roadmap.

² Cacao/Tablea Roadmap, Securing the Future of Philippine Industries, www.industry.gov.ph.

³ Cacao/Tablea Roadmap, Securing the Future of Philippine Industries, www.industry.gov.ph.



Photo from 100% PURE™ website.



Photo from Sephora.ca

Photo by Alex Lau & Rachelle Robinett

Although mainly cultivated for food use, cacao also has medicinal uses. It is used to stimulate the nervous system, dilate the coronary arteries, and soothe and soften damaged skin. It is also used against anemia, angina, bruises, chapped skin and burns, diarrhea, and leprosy spots.⁴ Cocoa contains a variety of chemicals, including antioxidants called flavonoids. It is not clear how these might work in the body, but they appear to cause relaxation of veins, which could lead to lower blood pressure. These compounds might also reduce the activity of chemicals in the body that promote inflammation or blockage of blood vessels.⁵ And, as a health food, cacao is packed with vitamins and antioxidants that make it almost a super food or a natural multivitamin.

The cacao tree also provides other commodities for local use, such as fiber for clothing, thread, and paper, wood for construction and implements.⁶

The diversified use of cocoa beans in the manufacturing, pharmaceutical, and cosmetics industries generally pushes the global demand of cocoa beans on an upward trend. The world demand for cacao has, in fact, nearly tripled since 1970 growing at an annual rate of 3%, with China and India's annual demand growth at 7.9%.⁷

Moreover, cocoa does well in intercropping schemes with many other agricultural products of the country such as coconuts and bananas.⁸

The Philippine Cacao Varieties

There are three major cultivar groups being grown in the Philippines by farmers. These are the **Criollo**, **Forastero**, and **Trinitario** cultivars. The Philippines has the ability to grow all of the three main cocoa bean types.



Criollo

Forastero

Trinitario

The **Criollo** is considered as the most prized, rare and expensive variety. The **Forastero**, a native of the Amazon basin, is the most versatile variety and most commonly grown cocoa. **Trinitario**, the hybrid of Criollo and Forastero, combines the best of the two varieties: the hardness and high yield of Forastero and the refined taste of Criollo.⁹



⁴"Theobroma cacao - L.", Plants For A Future, www.pfaf.org. Accessed on 25 August 2020.

⁵ Cocoa, WebMD, www.webmd.com. Accessed on 25 August 2020.

⁶"Theobroma cacao - L.", Plants For A Future, www.pfaf.org. Accessed on 25 August 2020.

⁷ Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry, 2017-2022 Philippine Cacao Industry Roadmap.

⁸ "The Philippines in the Cocoa-Chocolate Global Value Chain", DTI Policy Briefs, Series No. 2017-09.

⁹ Department of Agriculture and Department of Trade and Industry, 2017-2022 Philippine Cacao Industry Roadmap.