



NEWSFLASH : IPNI - Cocoa Care collaboration helping farmers in Indonesia revitalize cocoa production

April 11, 2014. Penang, Malaysia – A recent partnership between the International Plant Nutrition Institute - Southeast Asia Program (IPNI SEAP) and PT Community Solutions International's Cocoa Care program is starting to bear fruit.

Indonesia is one of the top three global producers of cocoa, and Sulawesi contributes 65 percent of the Indonesian production. Cocoa plays a dominant role for the livelihoods of many farming families in Sulawesi. Unfortunately, pests, diseases and poor farm management have reduced cocoa production significantly: Indonesian production dwindled sharply from approximately 700,000 tonnes per annum in the late 1990s to 420,000 tonnes in 2013. The lack of cocoa farming knowledge and farm inputs such as fertilizers further threaten the industry. Despite the increasing global demand for cocoa, smallholders in Sulawesi struggle to keep their farms profitable.

Cocoa Care, a scalable sustainability program, has been helping farmers rehabilitate their farms, through agronomy training, information dissemination, provision of inputs, and by building a unique cocoa community network (www.cocoacare.org). IPNI SEAP in partnership with Cocoa Care, are spearheading a research and development initiative, guided by IPNI's scientific approach to sustainable intensification and Cocoa Care's community-focused engagement.

IPNI SEAP engages Cocoa Care on good agricultural practices, specifically 4R Nutrient Stewardship; having identified this as an opportunity for sustainable intensification. By using farmer-led experimentation to improve cocoa yield, cocoa quality and farmer income, the initiative will quantify the nutrition contribution to yield improvements, quantify the market potential for fertilizers, and develop a farmer-led approach for sustainable intensification.

Preliminary field data for the first six months are encouraging.

The pilot phase was set up with a volunteer group of 25 smallholder farmers. In various cases, farms that combined good agricultural practices and 4R nutrient management reached previous levels of annual bean production within six months, with forecasted harvests of up to two tonnes per hectare per year.

Confidence in cocoa is growing. Farmers involved in the study are becoming convinced of the benefits of managing their farms with good agricultural practices including appropriate nutrient management. Those who own additional farms, have begun implementing these practices at their own expense. In addition, farmers are sharing their newly acquired knowledge with non-participating farmers. The IPNI SEAP Cocoa Care project is now seeking additional support to integrate more families, helping them transform their poorly producing cocoa farms into productive and profitable businesses.

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About IPNI

The International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) is a not-for-profit, science-based organization dedicated to the responsible management of plant nutrition for the benefit of people. Through cooperation and partnerships with respected institutions around the world, IPNI adds its strength to agronomic research, education, demonstrations, training, and other endeavors. Best management practices for nutrient stewardship encourage the concept of 4Rs - applying the right nutrient source, at the right rate, at the right time, and in the right place. To learn more about IPNI, please visit: www.ipni.net

Contact

Dr. Thomas Oberthür, IPNI Director of Southeast Asia Program
Email: toberthur@ipni.net