

History of the Cacao Cluster Suriname

In May 2023 the Cacao Cluster Suriname formed as a result from value chain developing activities taking place within the Suriname Agriculture Market Access Project. SAMAP is an initiative from the Government of Suriname, implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with the financial resources from the European Union (EU).

The SAMAP project (2018 -2024) aimed at strengthening the following value chains:

- 1) Export Fruits and Vegetables
- 2) Cassave
- 3) Non Timber Forest Products

232 projects benefiting with a matching grant support for asset capitalization (agriculture and food processing equipment, machinery and services) in all the country. These projects are enhancing the production capacity, quality of products and market access of the selected 3 value chains. Smallholder farmers and micro agri-processors received a small grant for equipment, machinery and the preparation of agricultural land. Among them were growers and microprocessors of cacao.

The value chain for Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP), which includes cacao, was formed in May 2023. The NTFP sector was for long time remained under attended and prioritized from both public and private investment, in spite of its important economic and social impact potential.

It was partly due to the SAMAP project that the NTFP value chain and its potential received more attention. Six clusters have formed. Together these clusters form the value chain platform for NTFP.

The clusters are formed around:

- Coconut
- Açai
- Honey
- Oils, tea and herbs
- Cacao
- Cosmetics

A total of two hundred members take part in the NTFP value chain platform.

Over the course of several plenary session a strategic plan was formed for the 2024 – 2030 period.

What

The Cacao Cluster Suriname currently operates as an informal group that consists of growers, processors, buyers and other stakeholders from within the cacao value chain.

These stakeholders – coming from Paramaribo district, Brokopondo district (Klaaskreek West), Upper Coppename ressort (Witagron and Kaaimanston) and the Saramacca district (Tijgerkreek and Misgunst) have bundled with the aim to start professionalizing the cacao sector.

When the Cacao Cluster will have been formalized as a cooperative, new members from all the districts of Suriname will be able to join.

The Cacao Sector Development Suriname Foundation was found as working arm for the cacao cluster on September 21, 2023.

Who

The cluster is managed by a board consisting of seven members:

Patrick Woei

Chef-owner of the Spice Quest restaurant in Paramaribo city. Founder of the Suriname Chefs Association, aimed at strengthening Suriname's culinary sector. Through his restaurant and catering business Patrick Woei ensures that high quality Surinamese products land on plates and in consumer's mouths, thus creating a demand that helps products find their way into stores. Besides being a promotor, Patrick also supports and gives advice to small scale processors on how to improve their business operations.

Rudi Clemens

Besides in his function as coordinator of the Multi-Purpose Cooperative WI NA WAN in the Upper Coppename ressort, Rudi Clemens plays an important role in the community of Witagron and Kaaimanston on the Upper Coppename river. Among other things he was secretary to the former Granman of the Kwinti, the smallest maroon tribe in Suriname. Throughout his long career he has focused on strengthening the social and economic activities in Witagron and Kaaimanston. In the Upper Coppename area cacao grows naturally in the wild. The cooperative is geared towards protecting, cultivating and processing these endemic cacao varieties.

Orlando Rantwijk

Orlando Rantwijk is secretary of the LOKEO Foundation (Foundation for Agricultural Development Klaaskreek and surroundings) and a geology technician. He is one of the driving forces behind the Klaaskreek West Project, in which 150 growers who will grow cacao have joined. A total of 15.000 cacao trees will be planted at Klaaskreek West from 2024 to 2028. From 2025 the Klaaskreek West Project will also house a primary processing unit with an annual capacity to dry 40.000 kilo of cacao beans. The processing unit falls under the tangible property of the Cooperative Cacao Cluster Suriname in formation (see information/organization chart on the last page of this document)

Hedwich Muler

Hedwich Muler is a cacao grower with 20 years of experience under his belt. Furthermore, he is the chair of the Frederik Wilhelm Muler Foundation. This Foundation manages the cacao planting of the Muler family in the Saramacca district. The yields of this biodiverse planting are purchased by several processors. The cacao garden of family Muler is the main and longest running supplier of cacao pods to Tan Bun Skrati N.V..

Virindra Jankie

Virindra is a grower of both cacao and açai in the Saramacca district. He has a background in Mechanical Engineering and has an MBA in Innovation and Technology. Virindra is Program Manager of the Master study Data Science at the Polytechnic College Suriname. Virindra represents the Cacao Cluster as member in the board of the NTFP value chain platform.

Rutger Lem

Cacao processor since 2011, working 'from tree to bar'. Co-owner of Tan Bun Skrati N.V. and staff member. He is alternate member for the Cacao Cluster in the board of the NTFP value chain platform. Rutger has a large network in the international craft chocolate industry and participates in fora. He has a MSc degree in Art History and has extensive specialized knowledge on the history of cacao cultivation in Suriname.

Ellen Ligteringen

Cacao processor since 2010, working 'from tree to bar'. Founder and co-owner of Tan Bun Skrati NV. Ellen is steering committee member 2022-2023 for the value chain platform Fruits, vegetables and Export and leads the Cacao Cluster Suriname. She represents Suriname in the regional commission of CROSQ on developing the standards for dried cocoa beans 2022-2025. Since 2011, Ellen has maintained good contacts with the staff of the Cacao Research Centre at the University of the West Indies.

Why

Mission: strengthening of the cacao value chain in Suriname to ensure the continuity of cultivation and processing through professionalization and formalization.

Vision:

- Stimulating new plantings
- Sanitizing existing plantings
- Stimulating cultivation in agroforestry systems
- Preserving of cacao land races
- Inspiring the next generation cacao growers and processors
- Stimulating a circular economy of value adding activities
- Upcycling cacao waste
- Stimulating import replacement
- Stimulating agritourism

Goals

Increase the production capacity of both cacao cultivation and processing.

period	Volume dried beans	Number of trees bomen	Number biodiverse growers
2024-2028	120.000 kilo	84.000	420
2028-2034	200.000 kilo	140.000	700

Three cacao nurseries will each have to produce 7000 cacao trees every year, in total 21.000 trees. To prevent the spreading of disease the nurseries will have to be located decentralized, in different districts.

How

1. By sharing knowledge and organizing field visits

Field visit September 3, 2023	Location: Tijgerkreek planting of Foundation Frederik Wilhelm Muler. Activity: pruning and mulching
Field visit November 11, 2023	Location: Klaaskreek West Project. Activity: planting cacao trees in the cacao education garden

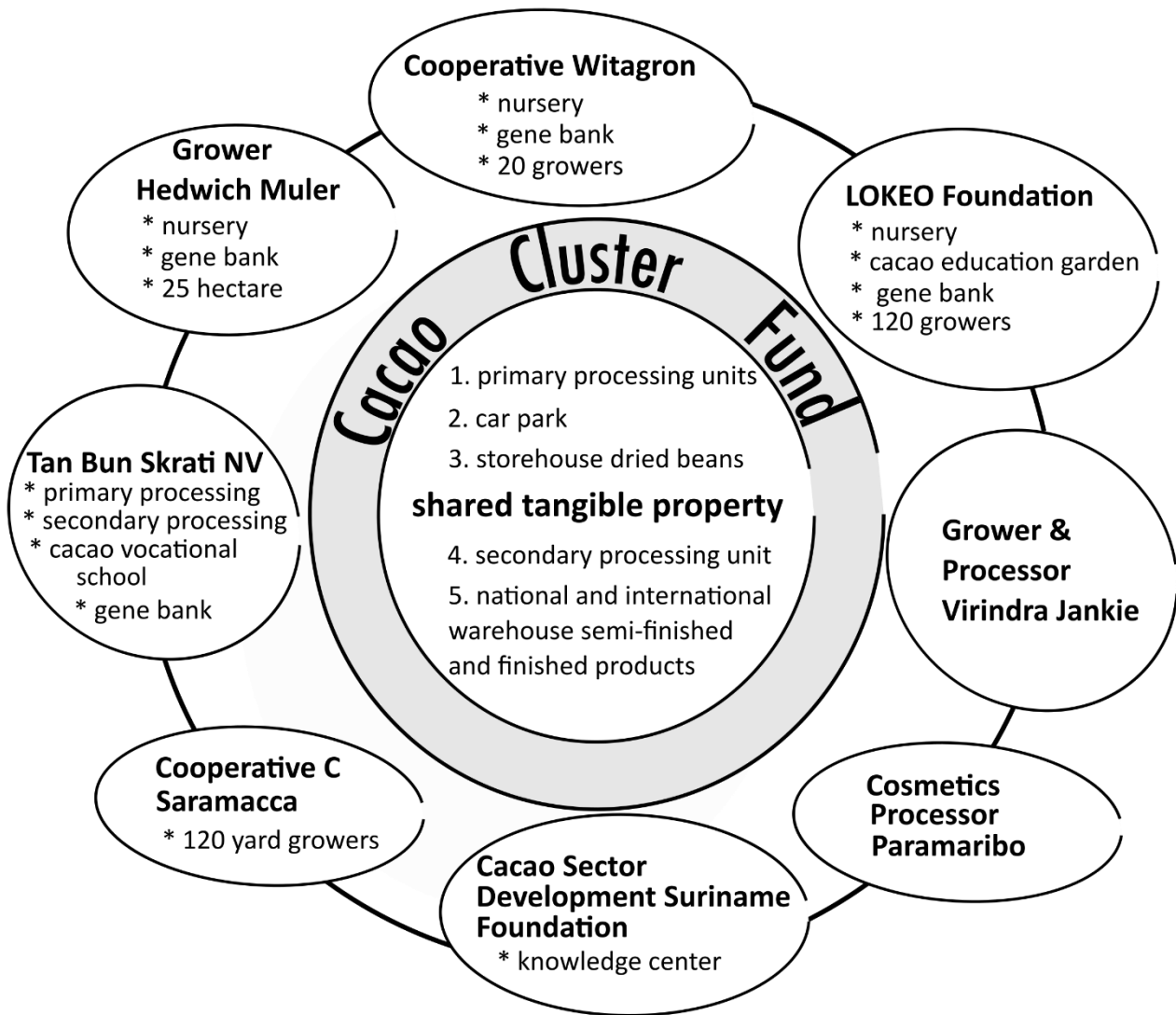
2. By creating a national database of growers and processors

3. By founding the cooperative Cacao Cluster Suriname mid 2024

(see diagram next page)

CACAO CLUSTER

Proposed organisational chart for the to be founded cooperative Cooperative Cacao Cluster Suriname, comprising stakeholders from all segments of the value chain. Every member retains its independency and control over its enterprise, foundation, cooperative or any other entity.



Shared tangible property

The profit of shared tangible property goes into the Cluster Fund.

The Cacao Cluster Fund

is responsible for the management and administration of the shared tangible property. It also manages distribution and transport. The Fund employs agronomists that support the maintenance of plantings. The Fund buys fresh "wet" beans and/or cacao pods from growers and cooperatives and sells the dried beans to processors. The Fund can provide working capital to members of the cooperative..

The exchange of knowledge within the cooperative will be guided by the Cacao Sector Development Suriname Foundation. Members can also mutually exchange knowledge.