

## Media release

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# CHILD LABOUR? PESTICIDE POISONING? HOW ETHICAL IS YOUR EASTER CHOCOLATE?

- **New survey reveals the chocolate industry's good producers and "rotten eggs"**
- **Charities call on a group of companies dominating global cocoa production to "stop poisoning children"**
- **29 organisations collaborate on Chocolate Scorecard to help the public buy responsibly**

How ethical is your chocolate? With the Easter egg season upon us, researchers have rated the social and environmental impact of the companies that control global cocoa production.

The annual Chocolate Scorecard study surveyed 38 of the world's largest chocolate companies, including chocolate traders, processors and manufacturers.

These account for 80-90% of global chocolate products, Easter eggs among them, and include giants such as Mars, Lindt, Nestlé, Mondelez (Cadbury), Ferrero and Hershey's.

Ranking highly in ethical terms were US-based Alter Eco, Beyond Good, New Zealand-based Whittaker's and the Netherlands' Tony's Chocolonely, which is now widely available in the UK.

Only three businesses – Starbucks, General Mills and Storck, manufacturer of Werther’s Original – chose not to take part in the study, eschewing transparency and opting instead to conceal their practices.

The 38 companies were rated on the six most pressing sustainability issues facing the chocolate industry: traceability and transparency; living income policies; child labour; deforestation and climate; agroforestry; and agrichemical management.

## **CHILD LABOUR**

While there had been improvements in many areas since last year’s survey, the researchers said there was still a long way to go in addressing the issue of approximately 1.56 million children caught up in child labour. This is in spite of repeated calls to address the issue and following a [major academic study](#) in 2020 revealing the scope of the problem.

Just this week (4 April) footage emerged of children working with machetes on a cocoa farm that supplies Mondelez, owner of Cadbury.

“We are not at all surprised that a journalist found child labourers on farms allegedly supplying Mondelez. Our concern is that we are not finding more of these children,” says Fuzz Kitto of Be Slavery Free, the Australia-based charity which coordinated the Chocolate Scorecard.

“Much of the child labour found in West Africa is the hazardous form of child labour, where a child is in danger through such things as carrying heavy loads, using dangerous equipment, such as machetes, or being exposed to chemicals.”

“Every year the chocolate industry’s big players assure us that they’ll do something about child labour and the huge numbers of children being exposed to chemicals that burn their skin and affect their breathing. We say that progress is too slow and they have to stop poisoning children to produce chocolate.”

“If companies started paying farmers properly, so they can get a living income, there would be fewer children forced to work in cocoa production and fewer farmers cutting corners with dangerous pesticides.”

The Chocolate Scorecard focuses on the production and supply chains that start in West Africa, where around 75% of the world's cocoa is produced.

“We’re often asked what chocolate is the most ethical to eat, so we always set out to name and fame rather than just name and shame. That way consumers get to see what better looks like,” says Fuzz Kitto.

## **GOOD EGGS AND ROTTEN EGGS**

This year Ferrero joins the list of companies, including Hershey’s, Unilever and Ritter, whose cocoa is close to 100% certified by the Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade.

“While certification is not perfect,” says Fuzz Kitto, “it is often a positive first step in a company’s sustainability journey.”

Storck, Starbucks and General Mills were awarded the researchers’ “broken egg” for their continuing refusal to cooperate with The Chocolate Scorecard.

Storck was given the worst rating overall and awarded this year’s rotten egg for lack of transparency about its policies and practices in its cocoa supply chain, and in light of civil society complaints about the company.

“If they are making progress on increasing the sustainability of their chocolate supply chains, then we and their customers and investors would like to hear about it,” says Kitto.

A positive the researchers found this year is the massive increase in commitment to cocoa production as part of an agroforestry system, whereby cocoa and other trees are grown together.

This system has many benefits, like maintaining cocoa yields while helping farmers diversify – and restoring and improving local biodiversity at the same time.

Nestlé is notable for not only its 2021 distribution of over 1 million shade trees and a pledge for another million shade trees in 2022 in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, but also a reforestation programme. As part of this programme, Nestlé has committed to planting 20 million trees every year for the next 10 years in the area where it sources ingredients.

The annual survey and its dissemination is a collaboration between 29 organisations from around the world, including Australia's Macquarie University and University of Wollongong, and the Open University (UK) as research partners, and not-for-profit groups, including anti-slavery charity Unseen in the UK.

Says Andrew Wallis OBE, CEO of the UK's anti-slavery charity Unseen: "When faced with the issues surrounding child labour, individuals often feel overwhelmed by the problem and ask, 'What can I realistically do?' The Chocolate Scorecard is a brilliant way to help consumers choose wisely and eat chocolate this Easter with a clearer conscience."

**Ends**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- For all press enquiries, pictures and expert quotes, contact Dominic Murphy 07943 498239 [d.murphy@unseenuk.org](mailto:d.murphy@unseenuk.org)
- Download the scorecard at: <https://www.unseenuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ChocolateScorecard2022-EngFINAL.pdf>
- Photographs to be used for this story only:  
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- About the survey: [chocolatescorecard.com/methodology](http://chocolatescorecard.com/methodology) (website live on 7 April 2022)

## **THE CHOCOLATE COLLECTIVE:**

**Research team** Be Slavery Free, Macquarie University (Australia), Wollongong University (Australia) The Open University (UK)

**Subject matter consultants** Forest Trends, International Cocoa Initiative, Pesticide Action Network, Südwind Institute, VOICE Network

**Partners** Abolishion, ACRATH, Asset Campaign, Baptist World Aid Australia, Child Labor Coalition, EcoCare Ghana, Estwatch, European Freedom Network, Freedom United, Green America, JATAN, El Llamado del Bosque, Mighty Earth, National Consumer League, National Wildlife Federation, Netzwerk gegen Menschenhandel, RAIN, Roscidet, SIM for Freedom, Unseen