

# **TECHNICAL WEBINAR: A Taste of Biodiversity – A touch of cocoa into the Mediterranean Diet, towards a healthier and sustainable planet**

## **Questions & Answers**

(Questions in bold)

**It has been demonstrated that biodiversity goes along with soil diversity, or pedodiversity. But pedodiversity is threatened by soil degradation, in all its different forms. Unfortunately the role of pedodiversity in supporting food quality and diversity has not well acknowledged yet. I wonder if panelists have specific experience of this. Thanks**

Soil is the most biodiverse domain in the world (and the least characterised - taxonomically and functionally). Soil has physical / chemical / and biological characteristics and these are interrelated. Biological activity influences physical and chemical properties. Soil erosion can be prevented by plant cover, perennial plant boundaries and terracing etc.. and through improved structure due to biological activity

**For Mario Marino: One of the main issues arising from the literature of cocoa production is that it is virtually impossible to naturally obtain a cacao variety which has high levels of disease resistance while also having elite quality taste-wise, both properties partly defined by genetics. It has been suggested that to obtain both qualities in a variety, genetic modification of the plant could be implemented. Do you know if this option is being considered? If yes, could this impact the cocoa market negatively by resulting in market restriction?**

Hi Riccardo, in order to obtain a new variety with good quality of cocoa and resistant to the main disease is not necessary to modify the genetic sequence of plant. Rather we should consider to use the genomic sequence information available of existing adapted varieties and make a breeding programme in which even the local varieties and crop wild relatives can provide genes and resistances. The market will benefit of new varieties without GMO.

**Could you explain why cocoa is being related to Mediterranean diet and why cocoa is being related to biodiversity in this webinar? Is there any indicator suggesting that traders and chocolate makers who buy most of cocoa produced worldwide are promoting biodiversity of cocoa in producing countries?**

As discussed by some panellists, cocoa is a crop of economic significance, with important trade, sanitary and phytosanitary implications, and is de facto part of many diets, including the Mediterranean one. Also, many chocolate production sites are actually located in Mediterranean countries. Much is being done for promoting biodiversity by various chocolate producers worldwide.

**My question to Mr.riccardo what was the idea of the blanket between the trees? Thank you everyone**

They are covered with glucose and other hormones that attract certain insects more than others, so no chemicals are spread in the soil and air. This reduces residue levels and reduces the use of pesticides.