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New cocoa marketing company launched to ensure Africa wins from its cocoa trade

Johannesburg, South Africa [African Cocoa Marketplace](#), Inc. (ACM) is a new company offering marketing and qualitative assurance solutions for African cocoa products and services. ACM puts farmers' perspectives at the center of the procurement process, to enable them to achieve more secure business relationships and greater respect as the women and men at the heart of the chocolate value chain.

Still under 'agile development,' the platform was introduced to industry stakeholders at the recent Amsterdam Cocoa Week conference, where it was hailed as a 'fantastic resource for linking markets, farmers, producer organizations, and cocoa operators.'

Dr. Kristy Leissle founded ACM after working as a cocoa consultant, scholar, educator, writer, and marketer for nearly twenty years.

Having spent a good portion of her career as a field researcher on cocoa farms across Africa – especially Ghana, where she lived for four years – Kristy said she has met countless farmers, traders, processors, and chocolate makers doing their best to maintain Africa's cocoa excellence.

She added that it is 'really challenging for these women and men to show that excellence to buyers.'

She founded ACM, which has been in development for the past year, 'to build upon her learnings of how to achieve authentic visibility into African cocoa value chains, and transform that knowledge into a business that can scale. ACM is creating a new model for cocoa trust and traceability.'

With more value added to 'responsible procurement' in the cocoa sector, the ACM pilot platform can help shape the future of cocoa trading by de-commoditizing cocoa and making the procurement process more transparent, so farmers have a greater share in revenue from the sale of their beans.

The platform pilot is open to Africa-based suppliers of cocoa, semi-finished products, chocolate, and other value-added products, as well as buyers of cocoa and cocoa products globally.

Benjamin Setor Gbadago, who leads ACM's research and social media, said: 'While developing the pilot, we have had to confront the issue of transparency. We are trying to understand as much as possible what the supply chain is like for the farmers as well as buyers. The problem is farmers have to provide all kinds of documentation to show proof of due diligence, but buyers rarely do. But the situation we are dealing with is a global challenge. **Everyone** should have to offer transparency.

'We want to make it possible for [producer organizations] to connect with as many buyers as possible, and transact business in a way that supports their vision. Soon, you will be able to type a few keywords into our app, and find the business partners who align with your brand. Then, you can negotiate a fair and transparent price for both parties.'

- **Website:** <https://cocoamarket.com/>
- **Dr. Kristy Leissle is available for interview**

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