



Terms of Reference

SHORT-TERM CONSULTANCY IN COCOA PROCESSING & CHOCOLATE MAKING TECHNOLOGY

Project: Circular Economy Cocoa - From Bean To Bar

Date: February 4, 2026

1. BACKGROUND

HELVETAS is an independent development organization based in Switzerland with affiliated organizations in Germany and the United States. HELVETAS has been active in Vietnam since 1994, working in various areas typically Agriculture, Biodiversity Conservation, Forestry, Eco-Tourism, and Rural Economy.

Under the SWITCH-Asia program of the European Union, HELVETAS is undertaking the Project “Circular Economy Cocoa: From Bean to Bar” with the main objective to develop circular economy solutions in cocoa and other agri-food sectors, leading to equitable economic growth decoupled from harmful environmental impacts. The Project has been implemented since 2022 in Central Highland, South East and the Mekong Delta regions of Vietnam.

The context is that Vietnam has fine-flavor quality cocoa beans, verified annually by ICCO, but local chocolate makers could not produce high-quality products because of weak processing skills and poor technologies. In a partnership with Trong Duc – the 2nd largest cocoa manufacturer in Vietnam, HELVETAS is seeking an **international expert(s) in cocoa processing & chocolate making**, to provide a short-term consulting package to support the company as well as benefit hundreds of local cocoa farmers in a larger extent.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this consultancy is to provide tailor-made technical assistance to leading Vietnamese cocoa SMEs to upgrade cocoa processing and chocolate-making practices through a circular economy approach, thereby contributing to higher product quality, improved resource efficiency, and increased value creation along the cocoa value chain.

Specifically, the consultancy will aim to:

- Enhance resource efficiency across the bean-to-bar process: Identify process inefficiencies and inadequate practices along the cocoa fermentation and chocolate production chain, and propose technically sound solutions to optimize fermentation and processing in line with circular economy principles, including waste reduction and by-product valorization.
- Improve chocolate quality and market readiness: Maximize the flavor potential of Vietnamese fine-flavor cocoa by strengthening chocolate-making technologies, refining processing parameters, and ensuring compliance with EU quality and market requirements, thereby increasing the added value and competitiveness of Vietnamese cocoa-based products.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

Task 1: Review the entire chocolate making process

The quality of the cocoa beans and of the chocolate will be checked, the entire chocolate making process – from bean to bar – will be mapped and samples will be collected for further analysis in the European lab facilities.

Task 2: Training & develop investment & quality improvement plan

A draft long-term roadmap plan for investments and quality improvement in the form of a powerpoint presentation will be prepared by consultants and presented to and discussed with the company. A training might be delivered to company staff in the meantime.

Task 3: Quality evaluation of cocoa beans and chocolates

The cocoa bean and chocolate samples will be analyzed at an European laboratory. The following analyses will be conducted:.

Cocoa beans	Chocolates
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bean cut & bean count test- Determination of moisture content- Determination of fermentation degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Determination of moisture content- Determination of particle size distribution- Determination of flow behavior- Detection of off-flavors by a trained panel

Then service provider will transform a maximum of 3 batches of cocoa beans into chocolates and apply the same analyses on the chocolates as listed above. This would allow a comparison between the quality of the chocolates made at Vietnam and the chocolate made at the European lab with technologies that are mimicking the current processes at Cacao Trong Duc. This would help to further develop the recommendations and roadmap towards improved processing and chocolate quality. Once the analyses and/or productions are finished, the analysis results will be documented and finetuned the roadmap for investments and quality improvement.

4. LOCATION

The factory of Trong Duc is located in Dong Nai province, Vietnam.

5. METHODOLOGY

The Consultant(s) should propose their working approach, methodology, team composition and suggested timeline for implementing the service. Collaboration with HELVETAS's Project Manager and the partnered company during the implementation is required.

6. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

The Consultant could be a firm or individual expert(s) and meet the following requirements:

- Practical experience, and specialized knowledge in various aspects of food science, processing technology, and management.
- Proven records working in the international chocolate industry and professional expertise in chocolate-making processes and best practices.
- Proven track record of providing consultancy and training services to chocolate manufacturers.
- Excellent communication and training skills, with the ability to effectively convey complex information to a diverse audience.
- Strong communication skills in English.

7. SUGGESTED TIMELINE

The timeline for this consulting package is expected as follows:

Activity	Tentative timeline
TOR publication	Feb 2026
Submission of Technical & Financial Proposal	Before 23 Feb 2026 (deadline)
Evaluation of Technical & Financial Proposals	24-28 Feb 2026
Contract negotiation & signing	1 st week of Mar 2026
Contract implementation	03 months (final payment before 30 June 2026)
Reporting and Liquidation	15 June 2026

8. TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL PROPOSALS

Interested consultants are invited to submit a proposal that includes the following:

- Technical Proposal: Should include company profile, team composition with CVs, relevant experience, proposed approach and methodology, detailed work plan with a timeline, field-travel plan, and quality assurance procedures.
- Financial Proposal: Should detail costs including number of working days, consultant rates, budget justification, and any additional costs (in EUR currency).

Interested candidates should send the Full Application to HELVETAS Vietnam via email tuan.nguyen@helvetas.org and C/C helvetas.vietnam@helvetas.org.

Title: Short-Term Consultancy In Cocoa Processing & Chocolate Making Technology

Deadline of submission: **February 23, 2026.**

HELVETAS Vietnam

Circular Economy Cocoa Project

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