

ECONOMIC
VALUE



ITM INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT

▶ **T A C A N A INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

THE PRODUCTION OF WILD NATIVE CACAO

The harvest of amazonian wild cacao in the Carmen del Emero community

In northern La Paz Department, in Bolivia, communities have cultivated varieties of wild cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) that are nationally and internationally recognized for their flavor and aromatic qualities. Traditionally, indigenous communities have cultivated cacao using agroforestry systems with seeds collected from the surrounding natural forests.

Wild cacao is part of the Tacana way of life and has been exploited economically since pre-hispanic times, when cacao was exchanged for other products and later used as a means of payment for state taxes. From the cacao fruit the cacao beans are left to ferment in wooden boxes and then spread out on tables to dry in the sun. This process intensifies the aroma and flavor released by the beans. Within the Tacana culture, the processed beans have a variety of uses including medicinal, food, and spiritual rituals.

A management plan was developed to guide and organize access, harvesting and conservation of wild cacao stands in the Carmen del Emero community of the Tacana indigenous territory and guarantee produce quality and quantity. Additionally, the plan strengthens local organization and supports the equitable distribution of benefits within the framework of the Tacana territorial management.

Cacao harvesters of the Carmen del Emero community identified 13 cacao stands (forest areas where native varieties of local cacao grow naturally) covering an area of around 3,500 hectares. Eight of these stands, an estimated 1,290 hectares, are harvested because of their proximity to the community. Their management provides an important alternative income for Tacana producers, enabling them to access niche and specialist markets that add more value to the production chain.



WCS

Economic value and innovations in the production of wild cacao

Community engagement in the Carmen del Emero Wild Cacao Harvesting Management Plan in the Tacana Indigenous Territory (2013-2016) is at 100%, with all 45 families participating. This reflects the economic value of wild cacao production chain for the producers.

A baseline of income generated by traditional harvesting was established. The production costs (labor, materials and supplies) per kilo of dry seeds is worth US\$1.4. The average annual extraction rate was estimated at between 92 and 230 kg per year per family, and depended on productivity. Family consumption accounts for 10% of this production, with the remaining 90% for commercialization at a price of US\$2.4. The annual gross income per family in a year of low production was US\$221, while in a year of high production increased to US\$552. Cacao production is one of few activities carried out during the rainy season, when little other income is generated, and is crucial income to use for purchase of educational materials for the beginning of the school year.

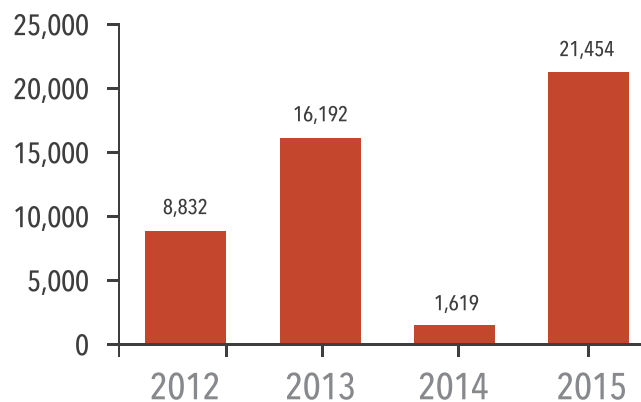
From 2013, it was possible to improve family extraction rates, as well as the quality of the cacao bean in terms of its flavor and aroma, with the application of technological innovations along the production chain. These included shade management, phytosanitary pruning, use of suitable tools for harvesting fruit, nutrient recycling, controlled fermentation in wooden boxes, and controlled drying on tables. This increased the selling price in 83%, from US\$2.4 to US\$4.4 per kg of dry cacao beans.





Mileniusz Spanowicz/WCS

Generated income of the wild native cacao chain in Carmen del Emero (US\$)



In 2013 the community commercialized 3,680 kg, while in 2014 that figure was reduced 90% due to flooding. In 2015 the figure rebounded to 4,876 kg – representing a 32.5% increase compared to 2013. This means that income rose from US\$16,192 in 2013, to US\$21,454 in 2015.

With the implementation of the management plan, production costs increased by 87% over previous years, especially due to investments in infrastructure and tools. However, it also improved incomes approximately by 150%. These figures confirm that the sustainable use of wild cacao stands is an important potential source of income for the families of Carmen del Emero.

In October 2015, a cacao sample collected and processed by the Carmen del Emero Association of Wild Cacao Producers (APROCACE), received the international prize for Cacao. Recognized for their work and the diversity of chocolate aromas and flavors, the association was ranked within the top 17 chocolate producers in the world.

Also noteworthy is that in northern La Paz Department, the production of cacao under agroforestry systems benefited 200 families from 25 indigenous communities, including tacanas, lecos, t'simanes and mosetenes, who are organized into different local associations: Wild Cacao Producers Association of Villa Fátima (APROCASVI), Native Ecological Cacao Producers Association of the Leco of Larecaja People (CHOCOLECO), Native Ecological Cacao Producers Association of the Municipality of Mapiri (APCAO Mapiri), and the T'simane Mosekene Regional Council (CRTM).

An important result of the commercialization strategy implemented by the APROCACE and CHOCOLECO associations is the sale of cacao to Chocolates Para Ti, one of the best chocolate producers in Bolivia that has been producing 75% bitter chocolate from native cacao since 2014. Chocolates Para Ti, through its alliance with the cacao producer associations, recognizes the important work of the indigenous producers and has shown a real commitment to the conservation of forests and wildlife in Bolivia.

CACAO PRODUCTION

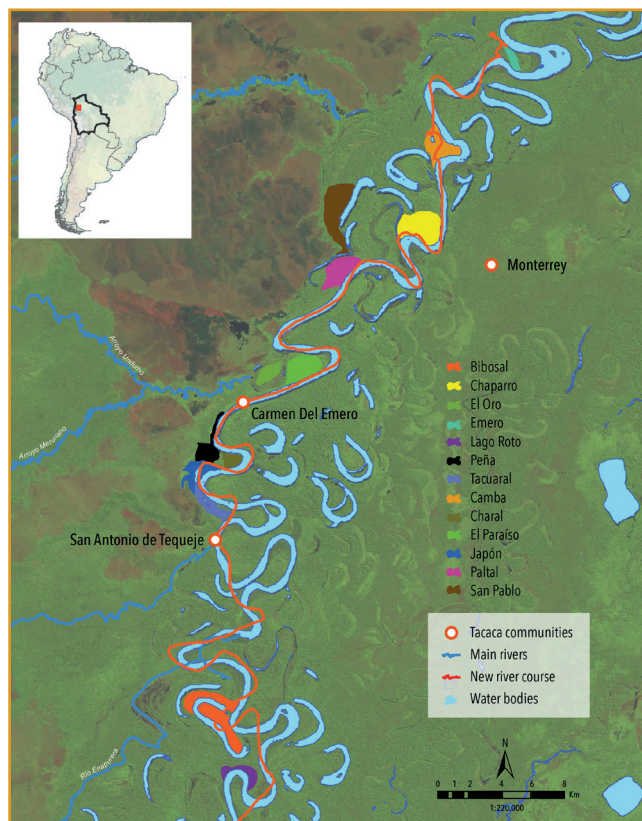
The harvest of wild cacao is a traditional activity of the Tacana people, as well as an important source of family income and food security. The cacao plant grows in natural forest stands in the Amazon rainforest of the Tacana region. Today the production of cacao combines both tradition and technological innovations based on biodiversity conservation. The resulting quality of Bolivia's Amazon wild cacao has earned the Tacana community an international award.

SUSTAINABLE USE OF WILD CACAO REFLECTS A SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC BENEFIT FOR THE TACANA FAMILIES OF THE CARMEN DEL EMERO COMMUNITY

The importance of wild cacao for the Tacana indigenous people

- A symbol of history and tradition that has been passed down over generations.
- Cover approximately 3,500 hectares (5,339 acres) through significant extensions of wild cacao stands.
- Contributes to the maintenance of forest biodiversity.
- Provides an economic alternative to the communities that live in protected areas or surrounding areas.
- Contributes to the nutrition of a high percentage of Tacana families who participate in cacao collection.
- In high demand in specialty markets for its quality.
- Recognized for its excellence internationally (in 2015 a sample from the community of Carmen del Emero received an international cacao award and was ranked within the 17 best cacaos in the world).

Harvesting areas of wild cacao in the Tacana indigenous territory



This study was conducted by the Tacana Indigenous People's Council (CIPTA), the Carmen del Emero Wild Cacao Association (APROFACE) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). It was supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Blue Moon Fund, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (HSI) and the Civil Society Support Fund (FOSC) of the Royal Danish Embassy.

