JOINT **ISCO**
MONITORING BRIEF 2024

3rd Joint Monitoring Brief of the National Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa in Europe (ISCOs)

Forum Nachhaltiger Kakao
German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa

Swiss Platform for
Sustainable Cocoa

DISCO
DUTCH INITIATIVE ON
SUSTAINABLE COCOA

Beyond
Chocolate

FRISCO
French Initiative
for a Sustainable Cocoa

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NATIONAL INITIATIVES ON SUSTAINABLE COCOA IN EUROPE (ISCOS)

The ISCOs represent five National Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa in Europe: Beyond Chocolate from Belgium, the Dutch Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (DISCO), the French Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (FRISCO), the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) and the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO). Through their collaboration, the ISCOs bundle efforts to jointly address key issues in the cocoa sector. In a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the ISCOs have identified four common challenges of the sector and documented the objectives of their collaboration towards a more sustainable cocoa sector.

The 4 common challenges of the ISCOs:

• Enhance the transparency in the cocoa value chain;

• Contribute to a living income for cocoa farmers and their families;

• Halt cocoa-related deforestation and promote sustainable reforestation and biodiversity;

• End child labour and forced labour in the cocoa value chain.

1. Background and Objectives

The cocoa sector faced a turbulent year in 2024, marked by high price volatility and ongoing uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). Within this context, ISCO members continued discussions to strengthen their collaboration, engagement, and accountability across the initiative.

This year's monitoring report reflects both the challenges encountered in the sector and the opportunities for greater alignment and collective action among ISCO members, highlighting progress and learning in pursuit of sustainable cocoa.

Selected data points from all participating ISCOs have been harmonised to provide a coherent overview of progress and gaps in addressing key cocoa sector challenges: transparency and traceability, deforestation, living income, and child labour.

This brief consolidates annual monitoring data from Beyond Chocolate (Belgium), DISCO (the Netherlands), GISCO (Germany), SWISSCO (Switzerland), and, for the first time this year, FRISCO (France). FRISCO's inclusion marks an important milestone for the initiative, reflecting growing collaboration among the ISCOs.

Key goals of the 2024 monitoring brief include:

- Communicating the latest developments in the cocoa sustainability sector, not only from national perspectives but also through a broader European lens.

- Providing a basis for informed decision-making by outlining possible pathways forward, based on the latest trends and challenges.

- Offering a sector-wide overview of key trends of cocoa sustainability in Europe and serving as a valuable tool for policymakers and stakeholders.

- Delivering updates on progress made in implementing agreed-upon sustainability practices.

This joint brief complements national reports, which focus on country-specific developments, by providing an integrated overview for the markets covered by the ISCOs. It consolidates the progress of the various national platforms, offering both an update on current efforts and a foundation for future actions, ensuring that the European cocoa sector advances in a more unified and sustainable direction.

2. Methodology

This joint monitoring brief brings together data from Beyond Chocolate, DISCO, FRISCO, GISCO and SWISSCO for the calendar year 2024. The data collection period ran through March 2025, using the joint ISCO online monitoring tool. The aggregated data was analysed by the ISCO secretariats, followed by a joint review with the ISCO Working Group on Monitoring before publishing.

The total number of reporting members increased from 80 in 2023 to 90 in the current year. This rise is mainly attributable to FRISCO joining the Monitoring Brief for the first time this year, adding 11 new FRISCO-only members. Overall growth was particularly driven by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which increased by six members, and the retail sector, which added four new members.

There was also some fluctuation in the composition and number of reporting members. A total of ten members stopped reporting (among others because of changed reporting requirements or members leaving, while eleven new members joined among Beyond Chocolate, DISCO, GISCO, and SWISSCO. In addition, one case of combined reporting occurred, where three members fused their reporting into one due to a merger. These fluctuations in membership and reporting should be taken into account when analysing the data.

Further considerations include the following:
- The averages presented are unweighted by volume and therefore reflect the average across member groups, rather than the total volume of cocoa sourced. As a result, changes in the average may be influenced by who reports in a given year.
- Double counting: despite efforts to minimise the risk, it cannot be completely avoided.
- Diverging reporting requirements across the ISCOs: for each indicator, an overview table shows the reporting requirements per member group and national ISCO, as well as the number of members reporting.

Table 1: **Reporting members, per actor-group, 2022 - 2024**

Member Type	2022	2023	2024
Trader / processor	8	10	11
Large manufacturer	27	26	25
SME	24	26	32
Retail	13	18	22
Total	**72**	**80**	**90**

3. Findings

3.1 Living Income

Achieving a living income (LI) for cocoa farmers remains a key priority for the ISCOs. The 2024 data shows further advances in both measuring living income gaps and applying strategies to address them. However, the living income gap among the producers for which data has been submitted remains large.

This year's monitoring also revealed opportunities to refine the current monitoring approach further, such as for example by developing more detailed guidance on indicator definitions and methodological application, such as sample sizes.

Table 2: **Reporting members for Living Income, per member group, 2022 - 2024**

Living Income	N 2022	N 2023	N 2024	Beyond Chocolate	DISCO	GISCO	SWISSCO
Trader / processor	6	8	9	X	X	X	X
Large manufacturer	10	9	14	X	X	X	X
SME			1			X	
Retail	3	3	3			X	
Total	**19**	**20**	**27**				

In 2024, the number of households for which a living income (LI) gap was measured increased further. 17 members submitted data for measurements conducted in 2023, while another 11 members provided results based on 2024 assessments. This pattern reflects a common lag of one to two years between conducting an income measurement and the availability of data.

As a result, some members reported 2023 figures only in this monitoring cycle, and a similar reporting pattern is expected in the next round. This is consistent with
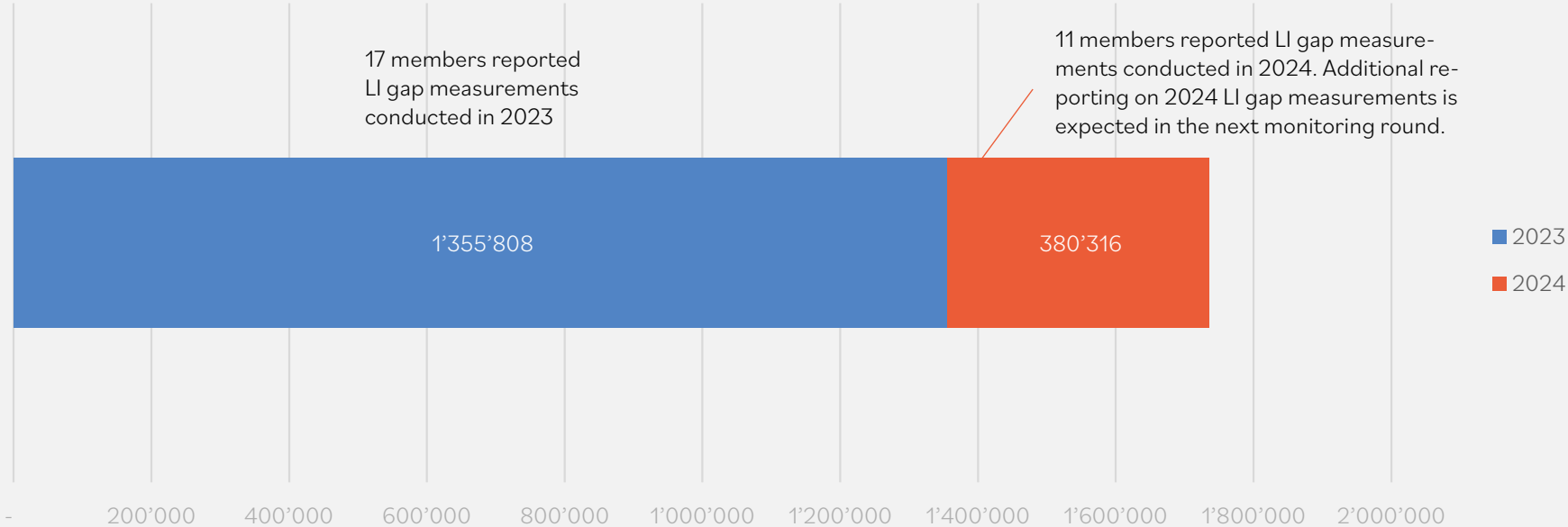
expectations, as members are not required to carry out income measurement on an annual basis; the resulting data therefore remain meaningful and relevant.

It is also important to note that fluctuations in the total number of households for which income was assessed can vary substantially from year to year, depending on which ISCO members are submitting data in a given reporting cycle. Moreover, the measurement approach itself plays a role: where members use representative sampling methods, the figures reflect not the number

of households directly sampled, but the wider population of households for which the sample is statistically representative. Hence, cumulative numbers may include duplicates and do not represent individual households.

On average, members that have reported on the number of households for which they have measured the LI gap, have measured the gap for 49% of the households in their direct supply chain in 2023 and 53% in 2024.

Figure 1: **Number of households for which a living income (LI) gap is measured**

17 members reported LI gap measurements conducted in 2023

11 members reported LI gap measurements conducted in 2024. Additional reporting on 2024 LI gap measurements is expected in the next monitoring round.

1'355'808   380'316

2023
2024

There also has been a significant increase in the number of households benefitting from the implementation of a LI strategy both in absolute numbers and in relation to the total number of households in the direct supply chain. The weighted average on the share of households in the direct supply chain for which a living income strategy is 41% up from only 13% in the previous year. LI strategies are predominantly implemented in Côte d'Ivoire, followed by Ghana and Nigeria.

However, although the ISCO monitoring definition of a LI strategy specifies that LI strategy require the use of "a combination, or "smart-mix" of strategies that target multiple income drivers", feedback from members suggests that there is a challenge with operationalizing this definition (the full definition of 'Living Income Strategies' in the monitoring can be found here). This is true as many members are not yet fully aware of the definition or find it difficult to assess if their strategies are aligned with the ISCO definition. Therefore, the result on this indicator tells us more about the quantity rather than the quality of LI strategies implemented.

Figure 2: **Number and share of households in the direct supply chain for which a LI strategy has been implemented**
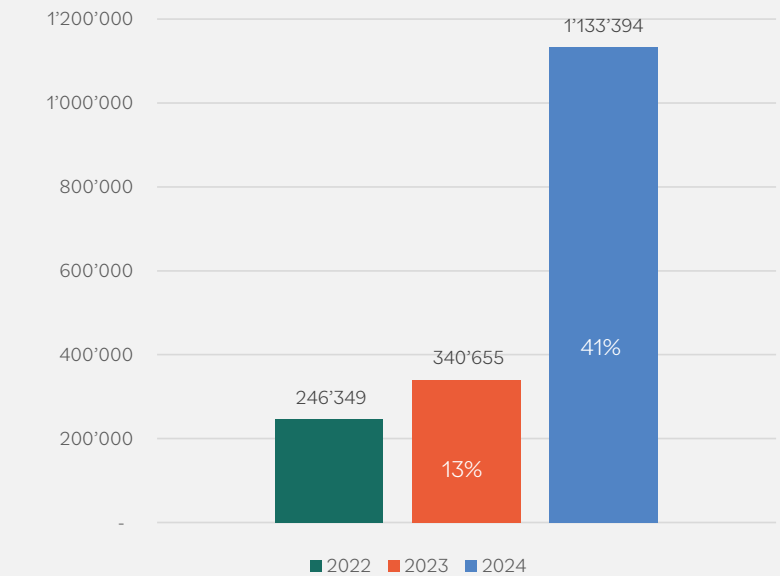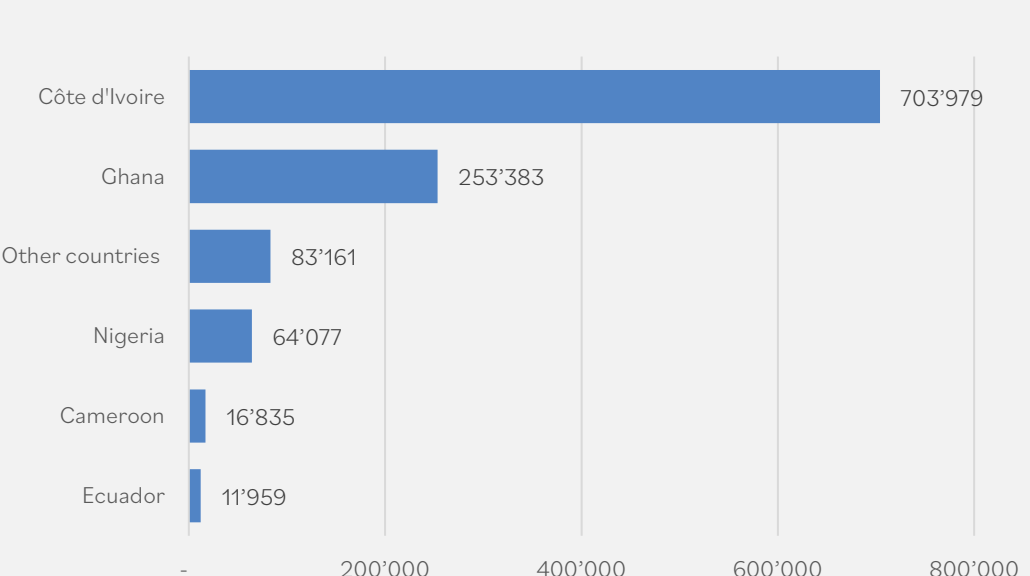

Figure 3: **Number of households for which a LI strategy has been implement in 2024 per country**

Despite the increase in LI strategies implemented, the living income gap remains large among those households for which data was submitted. Aggregated (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Dominican Republic, DRC, Brazil, Uganda, Papua New Guinea), about 90% of farmers are below the LI benchmark. Among the households for which a clear classification is possible, about half earn less than 40% of the LI benchmark (53% in 2023 and 42% in 2024).

However, for around half of all households, no sufficiently detailed information is available (below LI; undefined percentage). This means that while we know these households fall below the LI benchmark, we cannot determine their exact income bracket.

Not having access to this data also means that it is more difficult to compare over time if progress has been made in moving households up the income ladder. A further point of caution is that year-on-year comparisons should be interpreted carefully, as the results shown combine data from different members — and not necessarily the same group of reporting organizations each year.

Since members are not expected to measure income annually, the composition of contributors may change from one monitoring cycle to the next. As a result, a more robust and comparable analysis of trends in the living income gap will only become possible over time.

This year, we have decided not to report data on the payment of a Living Income Reference Price (LIRP), as exceptionally high cocoa prices meant that market prices exceeded the LIRP for the reporting period.

Nevertheless, several ISCO members have made long-term commitments to paying the LIRP, which will remain relevant should market prices fall below the reference level again in the future. Information on these long-term commitments is, for example, reflected in the GISCO roadmaps and DISCO action plans.

Figure 4: **Income of cocoa farming households in relation to the LI benchmark**
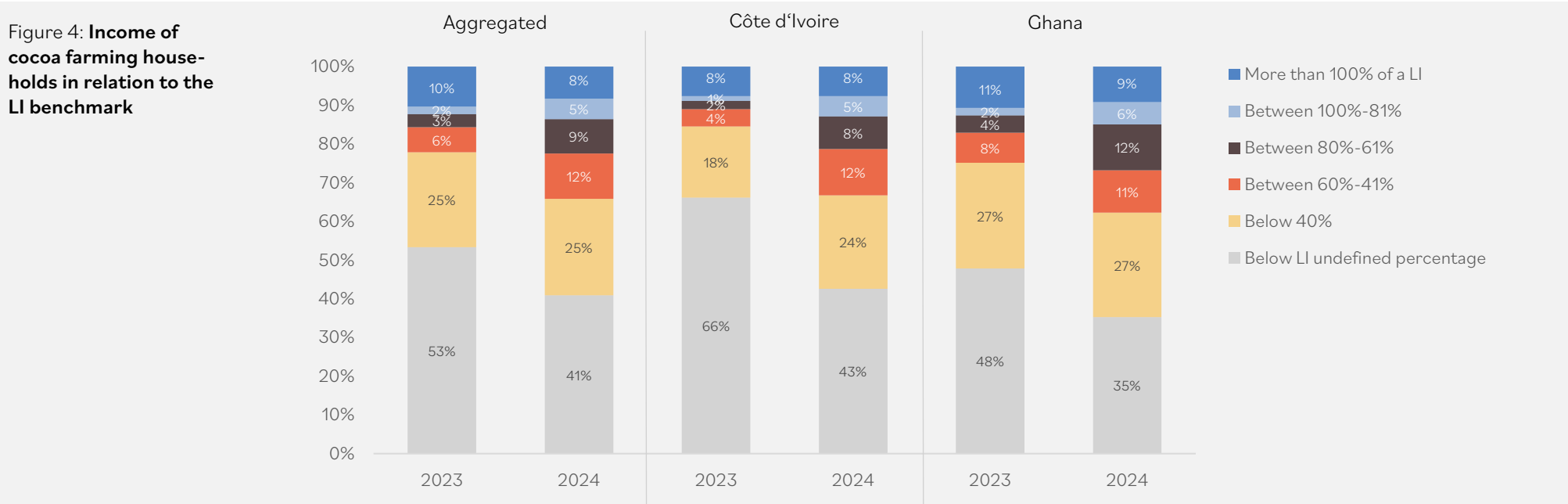
3.2 Traceability & transparency

In a sector striving to improve farmer livelihoods, protect forests, and meet evolving sustainability expectations, traceability remains central to understanding where and how cocoa is produced. It enables the industry to move beyond broad commitments by connecting supply-chain actors to the realities faced by growers and supporting more targeted, equitable, and transparent interventions.

Traceability levels in 2024 show little change compared to 2023. Despite some increases among most member groups, particularly among large manufacturers, overall traceability remains relatively low with the origin of roughly one-third of cocoa remaining unknown and another third only country known.

Traders are an exception, showing a small decline in traceability levels. This is largely— but not exclusively—due to lower shares reported by new reporting members, while traders who reported in previous years have made limited progress.

It is important to note that the reported averages are unweighted by volume. As a result, the figures reflect the average across member groups rather than the average for the total cocoa sourced.

Table 3: **Reporting members for Traceability, per member group, 2022 - 2024**

Traceability levels	N 2022	N 2023	N 2024	Beyond Chocolate	DISCO	GISCO	SWISSCO
Trader / processor	8	10	11	X	X	X	X
Large manufacturer	26	24	25	X	X	X	X
SME	24	26	31	X		X	X
Retail	10	14	10	X		X	X
Total	**68**	**74**	**77**				

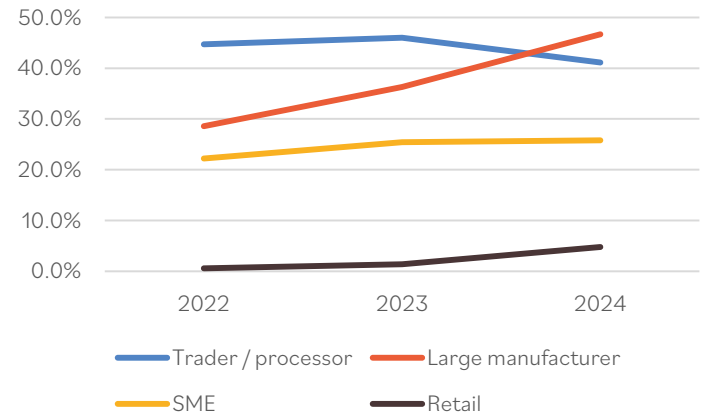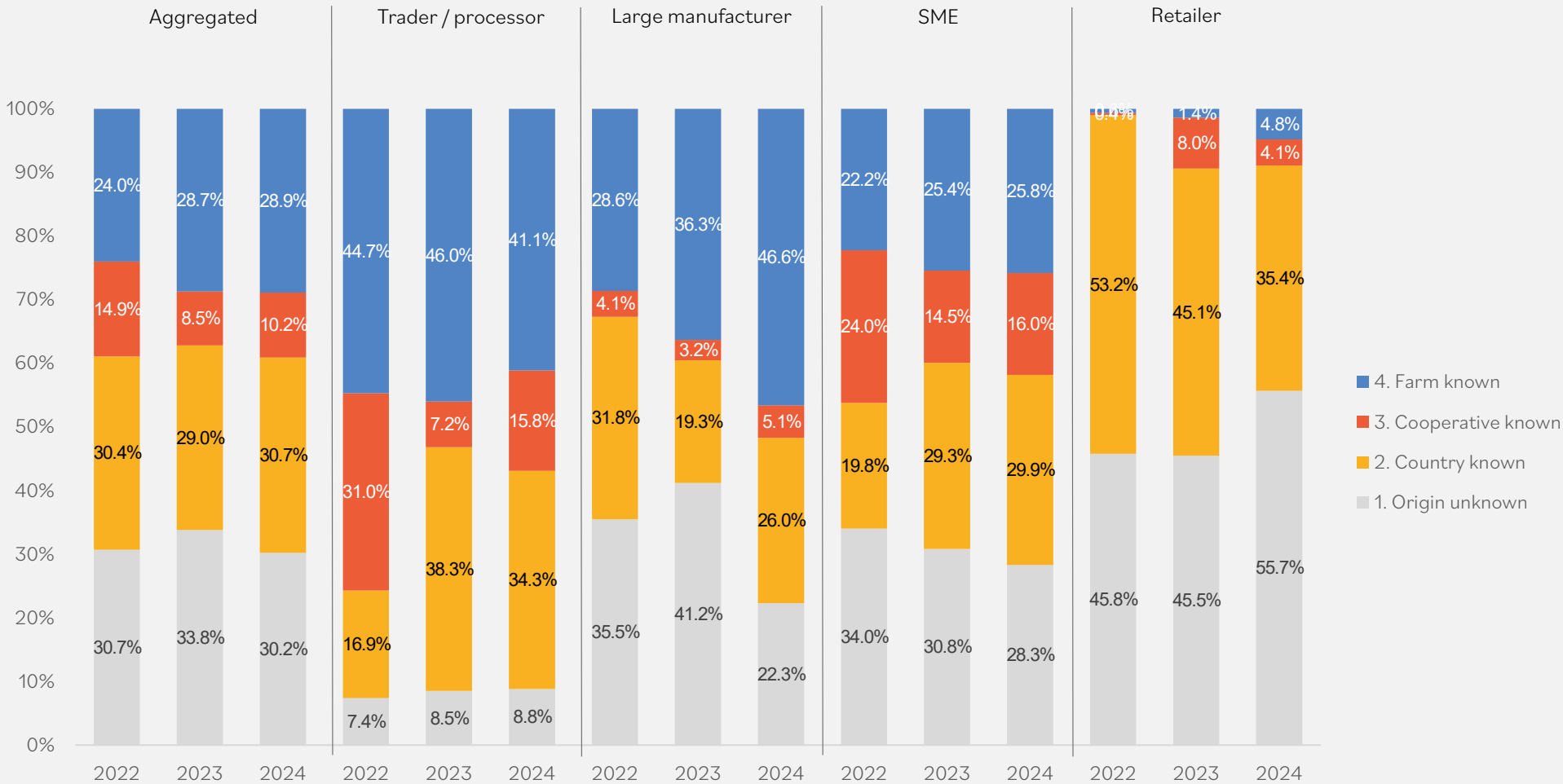Figure 5: **Share of cocoa sourced traceable to farm level**

Figure 6: **Traceability levels per member group** (2022 - 2024)

With respect to certification, following several years of steady increases, the 2024 data also shows a decline in the share of cocoa that is certified or covered by company programmes across all member groups except SMEs, This development may reflect the addition of new members to the ISCO monitoring who report below-average certification levels, as well as a greater reliance on non-certified cocoa driven by reduced global supply and, in some cases, cost-saving measures in response to higher prices.

Traders and processors continue to report the lowest shares of certified cocoa, while retailers—particularly for their own brands—maintain comparatively high levels, reaching nearly 90%.

Table 4: **Reporting members for certified and company programmes, per member group, 2022 - 2024**

Certified and company programmes	N 2022	N 2023	N 2024	Beyond Chocolate	DISCO	GISCO	SWISSCO
Trader / processor	8	7	8	X		X	
Large manufacturer	25	23	23	X		X	
SME	17	15	22	X	X	X	
Retail	11	13	18	X	X	X	
Total	**61**	**58**	**71**				

Figure 7: **Average share of cocoa in supply chain that is certified and / or covered through a company programmes**
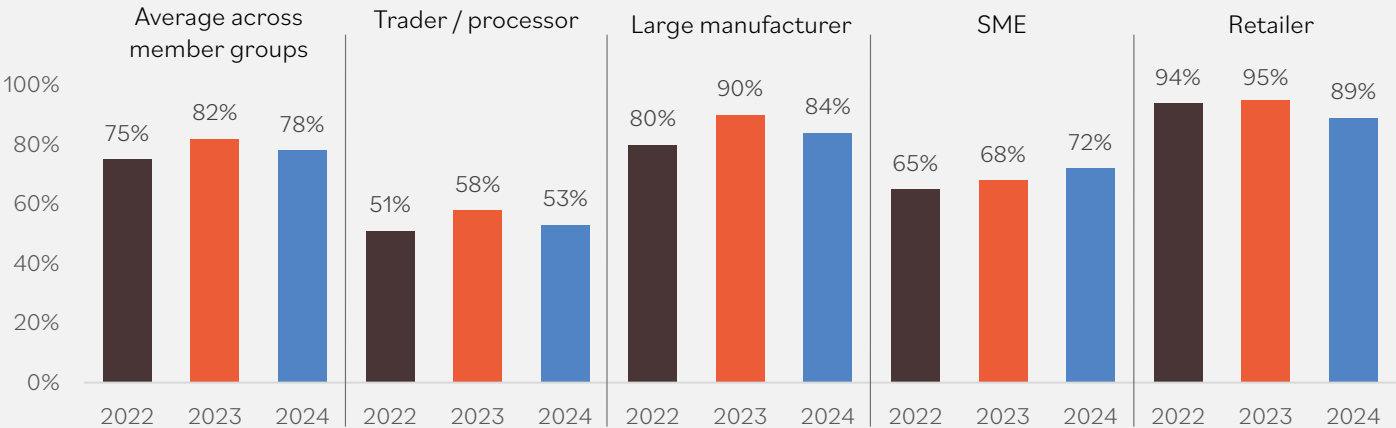
3.3 Deforestation

All ISCO members remain committed to halting cocoa-related deforestation. In 2024, ISCO members can claim on average 35% of their volumes as deforestation-free, reflecting an increase compared to 2023 (26%) and 2022 (23%).

Only a modest rise can be observed for traders and processors, who report an increase from 45% in 2023 to 47% in 2024. The strong increase seen in 2023 was likely influenced by a larger number of reporting companies and growing confidence in identifying volumes that can be claimed as deforestation-free.

Table 5: **Reporting members for Deforestation, per member group, 2022 - 2024**

Deforestation	N 2022	N 2023	N 2024	Beyond Chocolate	DISCO	GISCO	SWISSCO
Trader / processor	8	10	11	X	X	X	X
Large manufacturer	24	23	25	X	X	X	X
SME	13	15	18			X	X
Retail	7	10	10			X	X
Total	**52**	**58**	**64**				

Given the approaching EUDR implementation, the limited progress suggests that further efforts will be needed to ensure continued and substantial increases in deforestation-free cocoa across supply chains.

Large manufacturers show a more pronounced shift, increasing their share of deforestation-free cocoa from 28% in 2023 to 44% in 2024. Their progress brings them much closer to the levels reported by traders and processors. This significant improvement may indicate intensified efforts to strengthen traceability systems and prepare for EUDR-related requirements, though it should be interpreted cautiously and not necessarily as a direct reflection of year-on-year changes in underlying sourcing practices.

SMEs report an increase from 24% to 37% in 2024. While this marks a substantial improvement compared to 2023, part of the increase coincides with a broader set of reporting members and a stronger strategic focus on traceability and EUDR-readiness among companies further downstream.

As such, these shifts do not automatically represent structural changes in SME supply chains, but rather a growing ability and willingness to substantiate deforestation-free claims.

Retailers' share of deforestation-free cocoa has declined slightly, from 3% in 2023 to 2% in 2024.

This reflects the challenges faced by downstream actors, who often depend on complex supply chain information that may not yet be consistently accessible or verifiable. The trend suggests that continued efforts are needed to improve the availability of deforestation-related data along the supply chain so that retailers can make robust claims.

Overall, the 2024 results show that the forthcoming EUDR does not automatically translate into immediate or dramatic increases in deforestation-free volumes. Companies appear to remain cautious in making such claims, reflecting both the complexity of underlying traceability systems and the ongoing adjustments required to meet future regulatory expectations.

Figure 8: **Share of deforestation-free cocoa volumes per member group** (2022-2024)
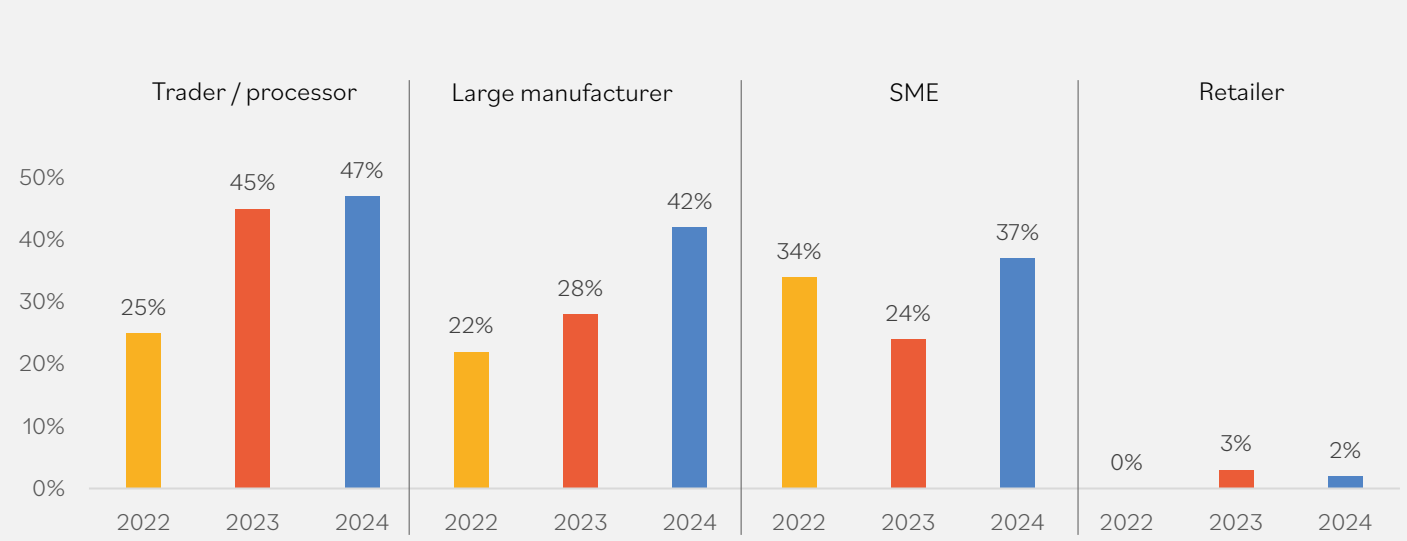
3.4 Child labour

All ISCO members remain committed to ending the worst forms of child labour in their cocoa supply chains. Yet child labour continues to pose a persistent and complex challenge, and this year's findings underline that significant efforts are still required to ensure that systems can reliably identify, support, and follow up with children at risk.

At the outset, it is important to note that the quality of data reported on the number of children who stopped working after two follow-up visits is low. Reported withdrawal rates—ranging from 80% to 100%—far exceed what external studies suggest is realistic for the sector. This raises concerns about the accuracy and consistency of reporting and highlights the need to strengthen data collection and verification practices across member systems.

Despite these limitations, the overall reach of child labour monitoring and remediation systems (CLMRS) continues to expand.

The number of households covered by a CLMRS increased by 24%, from 906,823 in 2023 to 1,131,995 in 2024. Likewise, the number of children covered grew by 38%, reaching more than 1.5 million in 2024 (see figure 9). This expansion reflects a sustained effort by members to scale up monitoring systems across their supply chains.

Table 6: **Reporting members for Child Labour, per member group, 2022 - 2024**

Child Labour	N 2022	N 2023	N 2024	Beyond Chocolate	DISCO	GISCO	SWISSCO
Trader / processor	7	8	9	X	X	X	X
Large manufacturer	12	12	15	X	X	X	X
SME	3	3	3			X	X
Retail	4	3	2			X	X
Total	**26**	**26**	**29**				

Figure 9: **Number of households covered by CLMRS and number of children covered by CLMRS (2022-2024**)
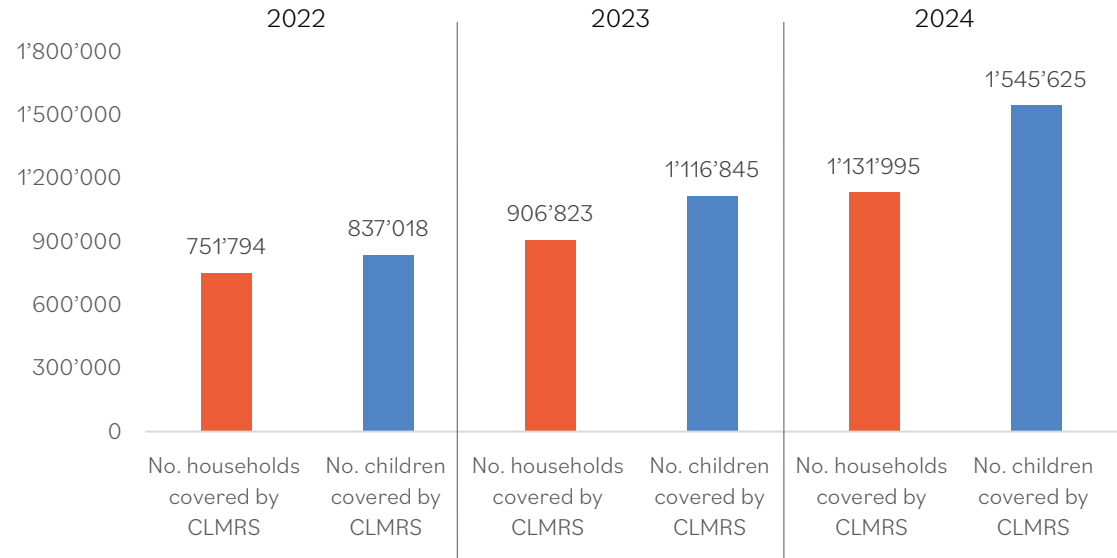
Table 7: **Child Labour Indicators, 2022 - 2024**

Indicator	2022		2023		2024	
	Result	No. of members reporting	Result	No. of members reporting	Result	No. of members reporting
Number of farming households in company's supply chains that were covered by child protection/Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) systems that prevent and address child labour	751,794	26	906,823	26	1,131,995	29
Number of children covered by a CLMRS	837,018	20	1,116,845	22	1,545,625	26
Number of cases of child labour identified	111,825	19	172,965	17	223,509	22
Share of child labour cases identified out of the total share of children covered by CLMRS	16%	13	15%	16	14%	22
Number of children among those identified as being in child labour that received support	66,231	18	154,356	18	204,601	22
Share of children among those identified as being in child labour that received support	61%	13	87%	17	91%	22
Number of children identified as being in child labour who received at least two follow-up visits	25,260	14	48,226	14	70,322	18
Number of households covered by another type of Child Labour Due Diligence system	4,810	3	14,741	5	17,836	6

At the same time, the identification rate remains low at 14% (see figure 10). While the number of children identified in child labour increased by 29% in 2024, this growth largely mirrors the expansion in coverage. These results reinforce how challenging it remains to detect all cases within a growing monitored population and indicate that coverage expansion may currently be outpacing the strengthening of identification practices.

Encouragingly, progress continues in the provision of support to children identified in child labour (figure 11). The number of children receiving support increased by 32% from 2023 to 2024, and the share of children supported rose from 87% to 91%. This signals that, once cases are identified, many members are making sustained efforts to respond appropriately.

Ensuring that children receive timely and adequate support is critical, and this year's results show advancement in that regard. However, the low reliability of data on children reported as having stopped working after follow-up visits underscores the need for improved monitoring practices to understand whether the support provided is translating into meaningful and durable changes in children's situations.

Overall, the 2024 results show continued expansion of CLMRS coverage and efforts to provide support to affected children, but they also highlight substantial challenges in data quality and identification effectiveness. Strengthening data systems, verification processes, and the maturity of monitoring and remediation mechanisms will be essential to ensure that progress in coverage is matched by progress in reliably identifying and addressing child labour.

Figure 10: **Number of children covered by CLMRS and number of children identified in child labour** (2022-2024)
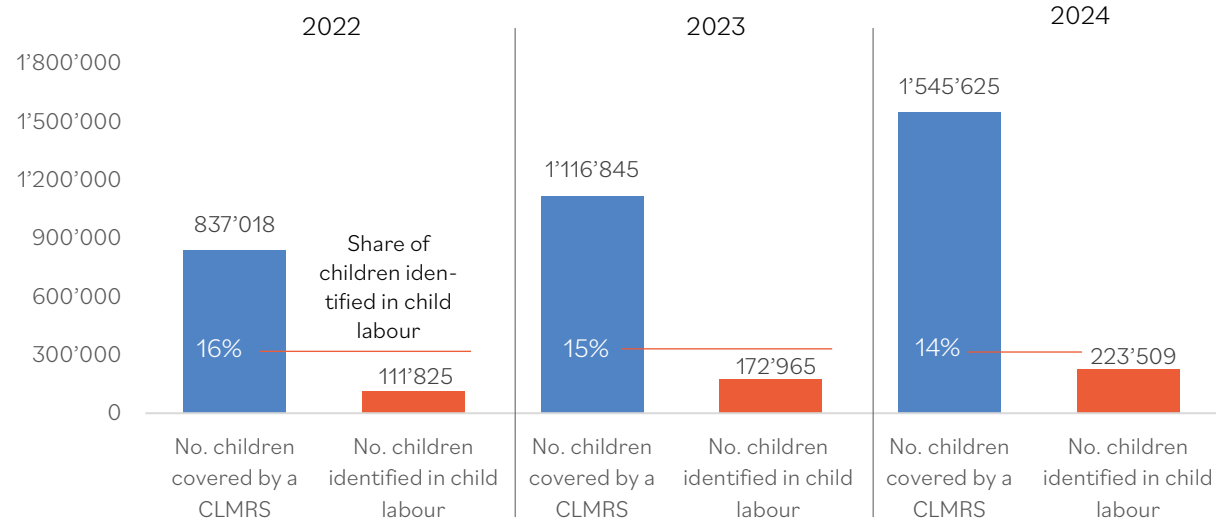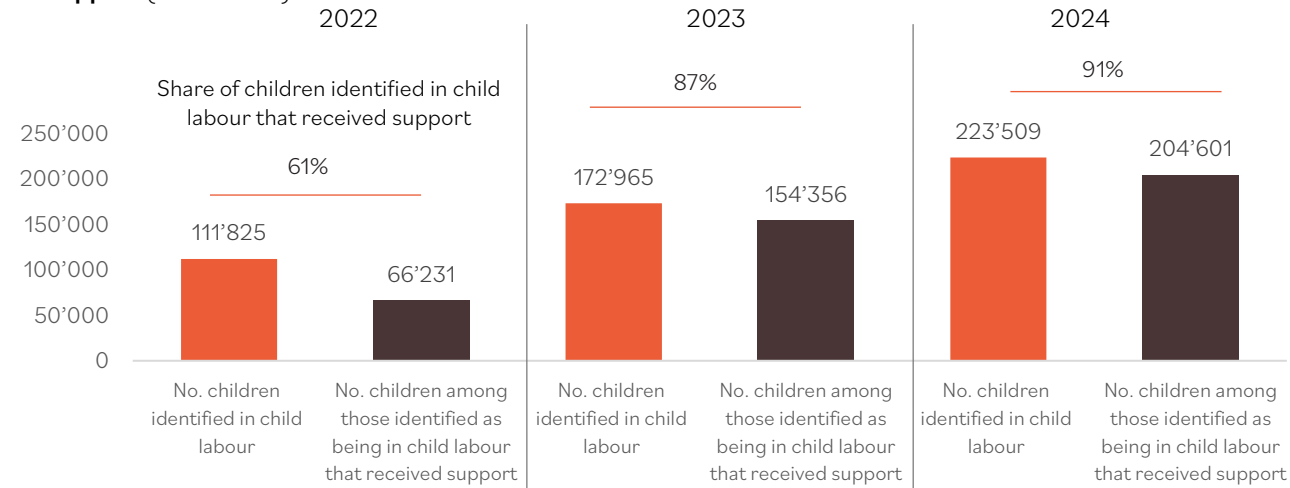

Figure 11: **Number of children identified in child labour and number of children among those identified that received support** (2022-2024)

Where do we go from here? 2026 outlook and beyond

Some of the key conclusions which can be drawn from this year's reporting cycle include

- **Membership** growth continues, but fluctuations influence comparability. The number of reporting members increased from 80 to 90, driven mainly by the inclusion of FRISCO and further growth among SMEs and retailers. At the same time, several members stopped reporting, and one merger resulted in combined reporting. These shifts, together with the use of unweighted averages and persistent risks of double counting, underline the need to interpret year-on-year comparisons with caution.

- **Living income** measurement and strategy implementation continue to expand, but gaps remain large. More members measured living income (LI) gaps in 2023 and 2024, reflecting continued commitment to assessing farmer income levels. The share of households for which members measured LI gaps stayed robust, and the implementation of living income strategies grew substantially—from 13% to 41% of households in the direct supply chain. However, many members continue to struggle with how to operationalise the ISCO definition of a "living income strategy," and income gaps remain substantial. Across all countries for which data was submitted, around 90% of households remain below the LI benchmark, with significant variation across countries and insufficient granularity for a large share of households. As in previous years, the mix of reporting members affects comparability, underscoring the need for clearer methodological guidance and more consistent data submission.

- **Traceability** progress has slowed, and levels remain relatively low overall. Traceability results show little improvement compared with 2023. Although some member groups—especially large manufacturers—report increased traceability, roughly one-third of cocoa remains of unknown origin and another third is only known at country level. Traders show a slight decline, driven partly by lower levels among new reporting members. Certification levels have also decreased across most groups, with the exception of SMEs. These trends highlight the continued need to strengthen traceability systems and ensure more comprehensive visibility across supply chains.

- Progress on **deforestation**-free cocoa is uneven, and significant challenges remain ahead of the EUDR. Across all members, the share of cocoa claimed as deforestation-free increased, but progress is modest among traders and processors. Larger increases among manufacturers and SMEs reflect expanded reporting and a stronger strategic focus on EUDR-readiness, rather than structural improvements alone. Retailers saw a slight decline in deforestation-free shares, reflecting persistent challenges in accessing reliable upstream data. Overall, the results suggest that the forthcoming EUDR does not automatically lead to major increases in deforestation-free sourcing; instead, continued strengthening of traceability, data transfer, and verification mechanisms will be needed.

Where do we go from here? 2026 outlook and beyond

- **CLMRS** coverage is expanding, but identification remains difficult and data quality issues require urgent attention. Households and children covered by CLMRS increased substantially, and the number of children identified in child labour rose by 29%, reflecting expanding system reach. However, identification rates remain low at 14%, and increases in case numbers largely mirror broader coverage rather than improved detection effectiveness. Reported withdrawal rates of 80–100% raise concerns about data reliability and underscore the need for stronger verification and monitoring practices. On a positive note, support to children identified in child labour continues to improve, with 91% receiving some form of assistance. Strengthening the quality, consistency, and maturity of CLMRS remains essential to ensure that expanded system coverage translates into meaningful impact.

The 2024 ISCO Monitoring Report demonstrates both the steady maturation of monitoring systems across the European ISCOs and the growing engagement of a wider group of members. At the same time, the results underscore persistent challenges that must be addressed to translate expanding data coverage into meaningful improvements for cocoa-growing communities—most notably the need to strengthen data quality, enhance methodological clarity, and reinforce the effectiveness of systems related to living income, traceability, deforestation-free sourcing, and child labour. Meeting these challenges will require sustained collaboration, targeted support for members, and continued investment in robust accountability and learning structures.

These insights directly shape the ISCO 2.0 agenda, which the European ISCOs will advance from 2026 onward following the completion of their revised strategy and Memorandum of Understanding in late 2025. Building on the momentum of recent years, the ISCOs will deepen cooperation across four strategic pillars: sustainable procurement practices, monitoring and accountability, a purposeful learning network, and a coordinated engagement strategy.

Key priorities include integrating new sustainable procurement indicators into the 2026 monitoring round, piloting confidential individual performance reports for members, further aligning with international reporting standards, and developing a consolidated ISCO monitoring report with national chapters. In parallel, the ISCOs will strengthen their learning offer through structured exchanges and annual learning agendas, while enhancing coordinated engagement with key international stakeholders to improve coherence and impact.

Together, these efforts aim to ensure that the improved systems and expanded data of recent years evolve into a more accountable, aligned, and effective ISCO alliance—one capable of driving measurable, lasting improvements in the livelihoods and resilience of cocoa-growing communities.

Imprint

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