

The German market potential for cocoa

Last updated:

02 November 2022

Germany is a massive cocoa and chocolate market with many opportunities for producing countries, both in the bulk and speciality segment. However, as the bulk market is reaching saturation point, there are new opportunities for exporters and producers, especially on the speciality market. This is mainly fuelled by the growing demand for darker chocolate, and the large organic and sustainable cocoa market. Germany is a major chocolate consuming country as well, registering the largest per capita chocolate consumption in Europe.

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1. Product description

The focus of this document is cocoa beans (whole or broken, raw or roasted). These fall under HS code 1801. Harmonised System (HS) codes are used to classify products and to calculate international trade statistics, such as imports and exports.

The cocoa tree (*Theobroma cacao*) grows in tropical areas between 15 and 20 degrees latitude north and south of the equator in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Cocoa pods grow directly from the trunk and thicker branches of the tree. After extraction from the pod, cocoa seeds (beans) are fermented and (sun) dried. A cocoa producing tree can deliver on average 7-9 kg of dry beans per year.

The three main varieties of the cocoa tree as distinguished by the international cocoa market are the following.

1. *Forastero* is the predominant cocoa variety. It is mainly cultivated in Africa, but also in Central and South America. It accounts for around 80% of global cocoa production. *Forastero* grows faster and gives a higher yield than other cocoa varieties. The beans have a strong, earthy flavour. Generally, bulk cocoa beans come from *Forastero* trees. Well-known *Forastero* subspecies are *Amelonado* and *Nacional*. *Nacional* trees in Ecuador produce fine-flavour cocoa.
2. *Criollo* (original cocoa tree) is mainly grown in Central America, northern South America, the Caribbean and Sri Lanka. *Criollo* makes up around 5% of global cocoa production. The beans have a delicate and sweet flavour. *Criollo* is often mixed with other varieties when making chocolate, given that it is scarce and expensive. Fine-flavour cocoa beans are produced from *Criollo* cocoa trees. Well-known varieties are *Chua*, *Porcelana* and *Ocumare*.
3. *Trinitario* is mainly cultivated in Central and South America, the Caribbean and Asia. The beans are a hybrid of the *Criollo* and *Forastero* trees. This variety represents around 10-15% of global cocoa production. The beans have a floral, fruity flavour. The cocoa beans from *Trinitario* trees are classified as fine-flavour cocoa. There are exceptions, however, as Cameroonian cocoa beans produced from *Trinitario* trees are classified as bulk cocoa beans. Well-known varieties are *Carenero*, *Rio Caribe* and *Sur del Lago*.

Cocoa-bean derivatives (cocoa paste, cocoa butter and cocoa powder) are covered in [our study on semi-finished cocoa products in Europe](#).

2. What makes Germany an interesting market for cocoa?

Germany is the world's fourth-largest importer of cocoa beans, and Europe's second-largest. It is the leading chocolate producer in Europe and is home to a large cocoa grinding industry.

Germany is the second-largest European importer of cocoa beans

With a market share of 20%, Germany is the second-largest importer of cocoa beans in Europe, preceded only by the Netherlands, which holds a share of 35% of total European imports. Total German cocoa-bean imports amounted to over 445,000 tonnes in 2021, at a value of €1,048 million. Between 2017 and 2021, the total volume of cocoa beans imported by Germany decreased slightly, at an average annual rate of 0.2%, but increased by 0.2% in value.

Germany imported about 23% of its cocoa beans through its neighbouring countries, mainly the Netherlands (78,000 tonnes) and Belgium (42,000 tonnes). About 73% of total German imports were sourced directly from producing countries. Ivory Coast (192,000 tonnes), Nigeria (47,000 tonnes) and Ghana (39,000 tonnes) were the main direct suppliers. Germany's imports sourced directly from producing countries decreased between 2017 and 2021, at an average annual rate of 1.9% in volume, but increased in value by 1.1%. Most direct cocoa-bean imports enter Germany via [the port of Hamburg](#).

Germany houses the second-largest cocoa grinding industry of Europe

Most cocoa beans imported into Germany are used domestically for further processing. Germany is the second largest grinder in Europe, after the Netherlands and the [world's fourth largest with an estimated 9.0% of global grinding](#).

It is estimated that the German industry processed [445,000 tonnes](#) of cocoa beans in 2020/21. In 2019/20, that figure was 430,000 tonnes. Numerous cocoa grinders and processors are active in the German market, ranging from major multinational firms (such as [Cargill](#) and [Barry Callebaut](#)) to national companies like [August Storck](#), [Weinrich](#) and [Schokinag](#).

Grinding is not expected to increase significantly in the future, as multinational companies are increasing their bean grinding activities in the countries of origin allowing these companies to have more direct control of the chain, lower production costs as well as to target regional markets.

Germany is Europe's leading chocolate producer

Germany houses Europe's largest chocolate manufacturing industry, predominantly using bulk beans. According to Prodcum data, Germany manufactured about 1,182,000 tonnes of chocolate products in 2020. Between 2016 and 2020, chocolate manufacturing in the country increased at an average annual rate of 0.6%.

Large multinational chocolate manufacturers such as Ferrero, Mars and Mondelez all have their manufacturing facilities in Germany and dominate the market. In total, there are over 230 German chocolate producers; examples of larger German chocolate manufacturers are [Hachez](#), [Ludwig Schokolade](#) and [Ritter Sport](#).

A large share of the produced chocolate is exported, which makes Germany the world's largest exporter of chocolate products. In 2021, Germany exported more than 950,000 tonnes of chocolate and other food preparations containing cocoa. The estimated export value of Germany's chocolate products and other cocoa preparations was €4.5 billion (16% of global chocolate exports). Between 2017 and 2021, export volume increased at an average annual rate of 2.5%, while its value increased by 2.3%.

Tips:

Activate the "Translation" function of your browser to make the studies available in your native

language.

Have a look at the website of the [Port of Hamburg](#) to learn more about the port itself and cocoa-specific opportunities.

See the website of the [Association of the German Confectionery Industry](#) for more information about the chocolate industry in Germany.

Use [EU Access2Markets](#) to analyse European and German trade dynamics yourself, and to build your export strategy. By selecting Germany as your reporting country, you can follow developments such as trade flows with established suppliers, the emergence of new suppliers and changing patterns in direct and indirect imports.

See our study of [trade statistics for cocoa](#) for more detailed information about the European trade in cocoa beans.

3. Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats on the German cocoa market?

Germany is a massive cocoa market, and also a major chocolate consuming country, registering the second-largest per capita chocolate consumption in Europe. There is a growing demand for darker chocolate. The large organic and sustainable cocoa and chocolate market provides interesting opportunities for cocoa exporters.

Germany is Europe's largest organic market

Germany is an interesting market for organic cocoa, as [it is the largest market for organic foods in Europe](#). German retail sales of organic food represented more than a third of the EU total in 2020, amounting to almost **€15 billion**. In 2020, [the share of organic food in the overall German food market was 6.4%](#).

Germany is also the fastest growing organic market in Europe, with a growth rate of more than **22%** in 2020. One of the drivers of this has been the [growing health awareness intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). The German organic market is [expected to grow at an average annual rate of 2.7%](#) between 2021 and 2026. Confectionery products, like sweets and chocolate, are expected to be the fastest-growing categories in organic food sales.

Organic products are widely available in Germany and competition is strong. In fact, organic products are now becoming mainstream in most categories, indicating the maturity of the market. Although the organic market has moved from niche to mainstream in Germany, the market for organic chocolate is still considered niche. About **2.5%** of chocolate sales in Germany are organic.

Organic chocolate is available across all price ranges, from low-end and private label to premium. For instance, retailer Aldi Süd offers [organic chocolate under its private label One World](#). Examples of German premium organic chocolate brands are [Vivani](#) and [Belyzium](#). Attempts by larger chocolate manufacturers in Germany, like [Ritter](#), to convert their entire chocolate line to organic [have failed](#) due to a lack of consumer demand. Still, all larger manufacturers will have an organic chocolate in their assortment. In the case of Ritter, the product line 'Ritter Sport Bio' caters for the growing interest in organic products.

Producers and exporters of organic cocoa beans are likely to find the widest opportunities in Germany, where the market is large and diverse, and which still has room for growth.

For an example of an exporter dealing with organic cocoa, check out [CONACADO](#), a union of cocoa co-operatives in the Dominican Republic. Apart from its organic, fair trade and other certifications that follow market demand, CONACADO's competitive edge lies in its business model: a union of small and medium-sized cocoa producers.

This model was formed in the 1980s with support from German Technical Co-operation (GTZ), now GIZ.

Growing demand for sustainably produced cocoa and chocolate in Germany

Up to **79%** of all chocolate confectionery sold in Germany in 2021 was made using sustainably produced cocoa. This marks an increase of 76% since 2011, when that share was only around 3%. This is partly explained by the [German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa](#) (GISCO), which since 2012 aims to promote sustainable cocoa production and sourcing. About 70 parties have joined this initiative, ranging from government agencies to retailers and key players in the German cocoa grinding and chocolate manufacturing industry.

The most popular sustainability certifications on the German chocolate market are [Rainforest Alliance](#) (which merged with UTZ in 2018) and [Fairtrade](#). Large German retailers such as Lidl, Aldi and REWE have committed themselves to only sell 100% sustainable cocoa. Consequently, most German mainstream brands are now certified by one of these certification bodies.

Sales of fair-trade cocoa and chocolate products in Germany have risen sharply since 2016. In 2021, Germany imported over **81,000 tonnes of fair trade-certified cocoa beans**. That has brought their market share close to 16%. Most of this fair-trade cocoa is sourced from Ghana, Ivory Coast and the Dominican Republic.

Given the widespread availability of certified chocolate in Germany, certification can be a key entry requirement for cocoa exporters in most market segments.

German consumers choose healthier chocolates

Germany registered **annual chocolate consumption of around 9 kg per capita** in 2021. In comparison, in Europe only Switzerland's per capita consumption is higher, **at 11.3 kg**. Bars and tablets are the most commonly consumed chocolate products in Germany. Although most Germans (**55%**) still prefer milk chocolate, **consumers are increasingly demanding high-quality dark chocolate**.

Consumption of dark chocolate is driven by consumer preferences for healthy products. **Chocolate with a high cocoa content is considered healthier than chocolate with a higher sugar and milk content**. Similarly, there is also a growing demand for sugar-free, sugar-reduced and vegan chocolate. Chocolate products with perceived healthy ingredients such as hemp seeds, matcha or acai fruit are also becoming more popular in Germany.

Although such higher quality and healthier chocolate remains a niche, the market is already quite competitive with a wide range of brands already available in German shops. New product launches continue, however, with one example being the **vegan milk chocolate bar from Ritter Sport** which entered the market in early 2022.

Growing demand for certifications on dietary laws

The dietary laws followed by consumers based on their religious background are increasingly taken into account by chocolate manufacturers in Germany. **Halal and kosher chocolate products are becoming more popular among the younger chocolate consumers in Germany**. An example is the German brand Iftarlade from manufacturer [Honeyletter](#), which offers halal and kosher chocolate bars.

Cultural diversity has also changed seasonal products. In addition to the traditional Advent chocolate calendar in Germany, there is now also a special **Ramadan chocolate calendar**.

Premiumisation of seasonal chocolate products

Germany is a traditional market, where seasonal chocolate products (for instance during Easter and Christmas) remain very popular. In 2021, an estimated **239 million chocolate Easter bunnies** and **103 million chocolate Santa Clauses** were produced in Germany for domestic consumption.

These products are usually made of bulk cocoa, and mainly sold by discounters and supermarkets. However, there is a **trend towards premiumisation as more niche products are being offered**. This offer ranges from

organic to vegan, fair-trade and gluten-free seasonal chocolate varieties.

Tips:

See [our study on trends for cocoa](#) to learn more about current trends and developments in the European market for cocoa and cocoa products.

See [our study on doing business with European buyers of cocoa](#) for more tips on marketing and promotional aspects of your cocoa.

Consider demonstrating the sustainable and ethical aspects of your cocoa production through certification. Before engaging in a certification programme, make sure to check (in consultation with your potential buyer) that this label has sufficient demand in your target market and whether it will be cost-beneficial for your product.

Besides your certification, also promote other sustainable and ethical aspects of your production process. Note that, in addition to certification, the transparency of the supply chain has become increasingly important in the cocoa sector. This means you should be able to prove and communicate a traceable chain for your products.

Find potential business partners in Germany by checking the lists of Fairtrade-certified operators, [German Rainforest Alliance-certified brands](#), [UTZ certified cocoa supply chain actors](#) and [organic chocolate producers](#).

Focus on the premium, speciality and fine-flavour cocoa market in Germany. You can only access the premium market if you offer high-quality cocoa. Try to establish direct trade relationships with smaller traders and chocolate makers. See the section on quality requirements, market segments and trade channels in the [Entering the German market for cocoa study](#).

This study has been carried out on behalf of CBI by Gustavo Ferro and Lisanne Groothuis of [ProFound - Advisers In Development](#).

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