



**COCOA  
NECT.**

# UCLS, Madagascar



**REGION:** Sambirano

**VARIETY:** Mix of trinitario, forastero and criollo

**SOURCE:** Union of cooperatives

**FERMENTATION:** fermentation boxes located in local collection centers

**FLAVOR NOTES:** citrus, floral and cherries overtone

**CERTIFICATIONS:** organic certified

## THE STORY BEHIND THE BEAN

**M**adagascar's cocoa history dates from the 1800's, when French colonialists first started planting cocoa trees on the Red Island. The trees adapted to the Malagasy climate and soil, and the cocoa has some unique fruity flavors which are celebrated by chocolate aficionados. In order to bring these beautiful beans to bean-to-bar makers around the world to have them turned into mouthwatering chocolate, Cocoonect established a partnership with the Union de Coopératives Lazan'ny Sambirano, or UCLS.

The cocoa of UCLS grows in the Sambirano region in the north-west of Madagascar. In this area, the cocoa grows amidst tall fruit trees with branches full of mangoes and bananas. Other food crops such as coffee, vanilla, peppers and pineapples can also be found in abundance. Even more special are the fragrant plants such as ylang ylang, vetiver and patchouli which make the air thick with humidity and aroma. Colorful wildlife

can be spotted amidst all this wilderness, with lemurs, an endemic primate, being one of the most rewarding to spot.

Because of limited infrastructure, many cocoa farmers in Sambirano were initially dispersed and non-organized. Therefore, they mainly sold their beans to middlemen, resulting in high price fluctuations and uncertain availability of transport means. By forming cooperatives, the farmers started to strengthen their negotiation position in the local market. Eventually, the UCLS union was created in 2009, which covers 24 small cooperatives and 400 farmers.

To add value to the cocoa beans of its members, UCLS started to export directly to foreign buyers. In addition, a bean quality program was launched which includes farmer trainings on organic agricultural practices, the selecting of best planting materials, and improved post-harvest techniques. Fermentation tanks were distributed to all villages to ensure optimal and uniform conditions. Technicians employed by the union closely monitor all farms of members, the fermentation and drying processes. With dedicated support from buyers - special thanks to Ethiquable - the union managed to increase the quality and value of their beans. All of ►

this has led to a vast increase in the quality and value of the cocoa. In 2016, Cocoanect started collaborating with UCLS and the French development organization SIDI to increase the Union's access to financial loans. This allowed further expansion of the Union's export activities and a secured off-take of organic premium beans and revenues to farmers.

Another important step was taken together with the French NGO Agriculteurs Français et Développement International (AFDI). A drinking water project in four villages was implemented and over 80% of the farmers' part of UCLS now have access to clean drinking water.

UCLS also mobilizes cocoa farmers to protect the Sambirano's unique rainforest ecosystem that is so important to both the characteristics of the cocoa beans and for local eco-tourism. With support from Rainforest Alliance a project was launched to plant new trees to battle soil erosion, and farmers are encouraged to grow the cocoa under a canopy of indigenous shade trees, which creates buffer zones around primary forests. This reduces the environmental pressure of monoculture on the habitat of the famous lemur monkeys in remaining forest fragments, and supports thousands of different species of birds, insects and lizards.

***“Farmers are encouraged to grow the cocoa under a canopy of indigenous shade trees”***

We not only believe the taste of this cocoa will blow you away, but moreover the cooperative's grass roots organization is something we celebrate and support to the fullest. Cocoanect is inviting new partners to support further growth of the union, and to expand agroforestry activities to protect Madagascar's unique flora and fauna.



## REVIEW BY

**Michael Coady**

Suma Chocolate

*The UCLS beans are really beautiful and have a great fat content. They are easy to work with and have very subtle and delicate flavours when processed.*



## TASTE PROFILE

These beans will surprise you with beautiful flavors, including some distinct orange notes. Tones of vanilla and light brandy notes can also be found, and there is a very rewarding citrus aftertaste. Fresh, friendly and full of flavor: these beans are simply screaming to be made into a fabulous bar of chocolate.

**CHOCOLATE:**

**ACIDITY:**

**BITTERNESS:**

