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Mr P. Henry

To: Mr. John Newman
Mr. Bob Eagle (External Relations Committee)
Cocoa Research Sub-Committee

From: Michelle End

Press Release for Guyana Cocoa Research Initiative 1998

Please find attached for your information a copy of the press release which is about to be issued by The University of the West of England (Bristol) on a cocoa collecting expedition to Guyana. The BCCCA Cocoa Research Fund has provided some financing for this expedition (£5000) which will be used for internal travel expenditure and the preparation of a final report. Please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Tony Lass if you require any further information on this project.

UWE Research to Seek Out Wild Cocoa in Guyana

Ten young graduates from UWE's Faculty of Applied Sciences will be spending ten weeks in Guyana during the summer of 1998 in an initiative to find new types of wild cocoa. The group co-ordinator, Dr. Mark Johnston, has already conducted a number of research projects in Guyana, including work on cocoa growing by Amerindians in the interior. Guyana does not currently produce cocoa commercially, and one of the aims of the project would be to help the country re-establish its cocoa industry, if this is feasible.

A major source of funding is the UK based Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance (BCCCA)*, who are keen to discover new types of wild cocoa that have good yield potential, early bearing and are resistant to the most important fungal diseases which affect cocoa - total worldwide losses of cocoa production to disease maybe as high as 30% though in certain cases, they maybe even higher.

After training at the Cocoa Research Unit in Trinidad, the group will begin an exploration of the remote forest areas of Southern Guyana - a largely unmapped region, much of which has not been visited since it was first documented by explorers in the 1930s. As wild cocoa usually grows near to rivers, the expedition party will travel by boat, specifically on the Essequibo River, living on tinned food and freshly-caught fish. The expedition is being most generously assisted with logistics by the Guyana Defence Force and the UWE team will also have support from the Guyanese National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI).

The aim will be to locate and map any wild cocoa trees, and to take samples - leaf material for research, budwood for grafting, seeds for propagation for establishment in a living germplasm cocoa collection at NARI's Horticultural Research Station.

"The main task will be to get material to the Horticultural Station where further tests can be done" says Dr. Johnston. "It might take a number of years to discover whether or not the samples are resistant to disease, but if they are, there will be benefits for Guyana and for the worldwide cocoa industry".

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The UK Trade body for cocoa processors and chocolate manufacturers.