

Why Brazil's cocoa market crashed—and how genetics is reviving it

Editor's note: This article describes a [study](#) by researchers at the University of Campinas's Biology Institute and was published in PLOS.

Brazil was once the world's second-largest cocoa producer and now ranks sixth. After more than 20 years of exile from the global market, cocoa growers were able to resume exports of the commodity only in 2015. ...

The culprit behind the decline of Bahian cocoa was the fungus *Moniliophthora perniciosa*, which causes witch's broom. This disease appeared in the Ilhéus-Itabuna area in 1989 and attacked the shoots, flowers and pods of cocoa trees....

One of the most innovative initiatives is a study of the genetic structure and molecular diversity of the varieties of cocoa grown in Bahia for over 200 years.

...

The genetic base [of cocoa plants] was found to be very narrow: literally all of Bahia's cocoa trees are the descendants of only a few individuals. More specifically, they all originated from a small number of Forastero seeds, including the handful picked by Warneau 270 years ago.

...

The good news brought by the researchers was the discovery of trees growing on local farms that were disease resistant and that displayed greater genetic diversity than the previously known hybrids.

...

New hybrids involving the trees found to be disease resistant and to display broader genetic diversity are now being obtained by plant breeders at Bahia's research centers.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Scientists uncover the genetic history of cocoa in Brazil](#)