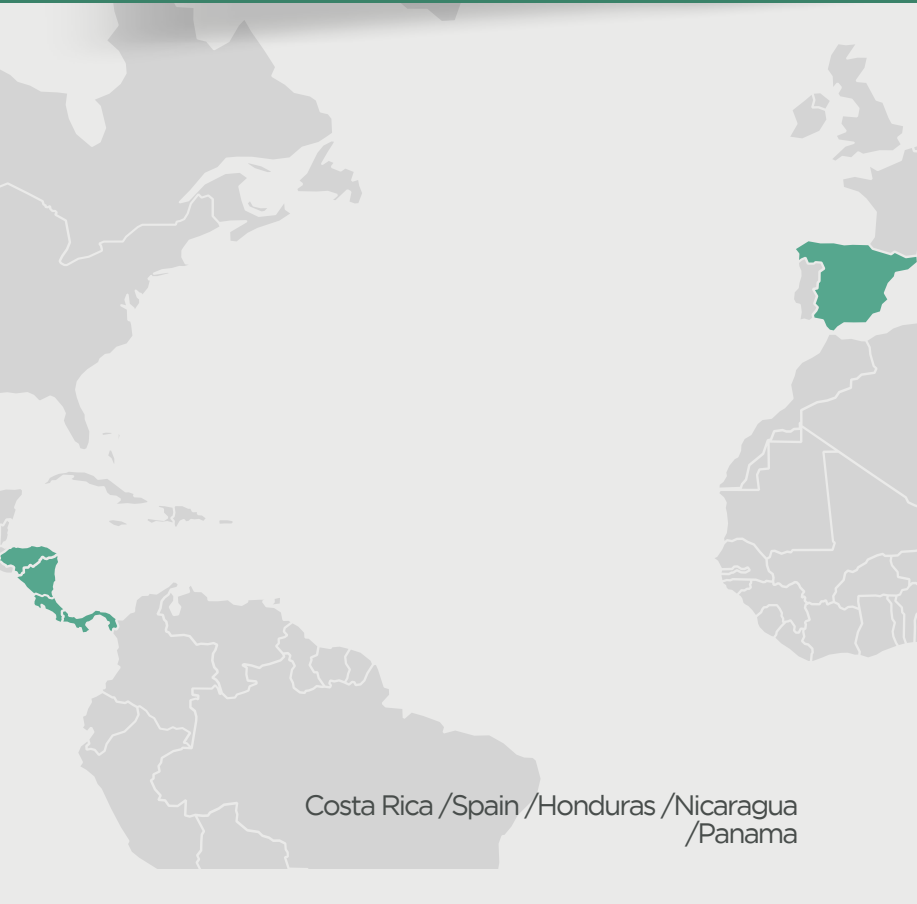


Mesoamerican origin cocoa

A territorial valorization strategy is proposed for technical study and capacity building focusing on the differentiation of fine and aromatic cocoa of Mesoamerican origin through the promotion of Geographical Indications (GIs).



Costa Rica /Spain /Honduras /Nicaragua /Panama

- 

16

Cocoa production regions delimited
- 

1

Historical study on Mesoamerican cocoa
- 

16

Strategic territorial networks
- 

1

Regional cooperation network on cocoa GIs
- 

50

Territorial actors trained in GI management
- 

1

Study of the legal framework for cocoa GIs
- 

1

Study of cocoa genomic diversity
- 

1

Geographical classification model for cocoa



Geographical Indications for Mesoamerican Cocoa

Initiative

This project aims to identify territorial factors key to differentiating quality of origin-specific cocoa for the development of Geographical Indications (GIs). The project will facilitate the collective management of innovation, increasing added value, the protection of biocultural heritage and the promotion of territories traditionally bound to cocoa production. Integral strategies will be

developed for the identification of extrinsic and intrinsic quality of cocoa beans. Studies will include historic-cultural aspects, typologies of production systems, agronomical and post-harvest practices, as well as quality profile analysis. Furthermore, the project will establish actions for the generation of key organizational capacities for the implementation and sustainability of GIs.

Differentiation of Mesoamerican origin cocoa beans.

Tech solution

The project energizes territories and promotes cacaos from regions of prestige through multidisciplinary studies that protect biocultural heritage and drive innovation. Mesoamerican in scope, its technical execution is most advanced in Costa Rica and Honduras, where producer organizations and value-chain stakeholders are being brought together. In collaboration with international academic partners, the solution integrates genomic diversity through whole-genome sequencing, the chemometric analysis of volatile compounds, and a region-by-region

sensory profile. These studies, still ongoing, show that tangible dimensions alone are not enough to differentiate origin: quality is also built from cultural and social factors, and post-harvest practices are part of the terroir. The project therefore incorporates intangible dimensions into the technical case for Geographical Indications (GIs), supports the formation of Regulatory Councils, and articulates a cooperation platform informed by models that link quality designations with territorial tourism.

Geographical Indications for Mesoamerica Cacao



Indicaciones geográficas para el cacao mesoamericano

Informe de avance del proyecto en el marco del Taller de Seguimiento Técnico Anual. 2026, Costa Rica

Carlos Eduardo Hernandez, PhD
LIDER DE PROYECTO
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL, COSTA RICA





[Indicaciones geográficas para el cacao mesoamericano](#)
Carlos Eduardo Hernandez

MORE INFO



Impacts and Results

Against a backdrop in which Mesoamerica's fine and aroma cacaos remained undervalued and lacked mechanisms for differentiation, the project has generated the first technical evidence linking quality to territory: a study of the regional legal framework for Geographical Indications, maps delimiting the regions of prestige, and advances in the genomic, sensory, and chemometric characterization of cacao. The genomic characterization documented a

distinctive local diversity, not represented in global collections, and confirmed the persistence of ancestral Criollo germplasm maintained by farmers. In addition, quality of origin is being reconceptualized as a technical, cultural, and social construct, while organizational capacities and stakeholder networks are being strengthened toward the future formation of Regulatory Councils. In this way, communities are beginning to recognize and value the uniqueness of their cacao.

Main Donors



Organizations

