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## Climate Change Leads to Higher Prices for Chocolate

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Chocolate makers are expected to raise prices this year because of higher costs of cocoa from exporters like Ivory Coast. The West African country is the world's largest cocoa producer.

Hershey is the largest producer of chocolate products in the United States. It said last month it plans to raise prices on all of its products because of the rising cost of ingredients. Ingredients are the things used to make a food or product.

Demand for chocolate in America increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and cocoa producers in places like Ivory Coast are struggling to keep up with that demand. Experts say one reason for that is climate change.

Harvard University researchers estimate that by 2030 parts of West Africa will be too hot and dry to produce much cocoa. The West African countries of Ghana and Ivory Coast together produce 70 percent of worldwide cocoa supply.

Cocoa farmer Raphael Konan Kouassi recently took VOA to his farm. Huge green and yellow cocoa **pods** hung from trees. He said his trees are producing less because of rising temperatures and less rainfall than usual.

"Almost all of the young plants die in the high season. If you have not been able to get water to them, you have no cocoa," Kouassi said.

Kouassi receives government assistance in the form of cocoa trees. But he said the government gives out trees at the wrong time of year. Because of this, the young trees have a difficult time surviving.

Christian Bunn is with the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, a worldwide scientific organization. Bunn said information about how the climate is changing can inform farmers about how to better care for their crops.

"What we're seeing is that the onset of both dry and wet season can change. It's less **reliable**. During the season, there may be breaks in terms of rain during the dry season, or there's a dry **spell** during the wet season," Bunn said.

The data show it may be better for farmers to stop producing cocoa and instead grow a variety of different crops, he said.

But the chief of one Ivorian company that supplies The Hershey Company said higher prices for cocoa could be welcomed by farmers. Olga Yenou said, "My opinion is that these farmers should have better prices, should earn more, because they work hard. Most are poor," Yenou said.

Her wish appears to be coming true. As climate change continues to have effects on production, prices continue to rise.

I'm Ashley Thompson.

*Henry Wilkins reported this story for VOA News. Ashley Thompson adapted it for Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**pod** - n. a long, thin part of some plants that has seeds inside

**reliable** - adj. able to be trusted to do or provide what is needed

**spell** - n. a short period of time usually marked by a particular activity or condition

