

# The Work of the Slaves in the Cocoa Industry



*Cocoa tree*

**Cocoa** was produced chiefly in Jamaica, St. Vincent, Dominica and Grenada. The slaves would clear the land and plant the cuttings directly. It takes about five (5) years for the trees to grow to maturity but the best harvest is after eight years. The second option is to plant the seedlings that are grown in a nursery. The seedlings are allowed to grow to a certain height before they are transplanted. The slaves then plant cash crops around the cocoa plants to increase the humidity while providing shade. The pods take about five and a half months to mature so there are two harvesting seasons for this industry. In the meanwhile, the slaves constantly weed the fields.

When the pods are ready for harvesting, the first gang of slaves armed with machetes move into the fields to cut the pods swiftly from the tree. They drop these in the baskets that they have been provided with. Since they have to cover a wide area, these are usually the older or stronger slaves.

The second gang use their machetes to split the pods open to enable them to remove the pulpy or flesh fruit inside. The fruit is then put to dry and ferment. This takes about five to seven days in the sun. The pulp drains away leaving just the beans. In Grenada, slaves dance on the beans to give them a polished look. This attracts the buyer faster than dull beans. The beans are then packed for export.



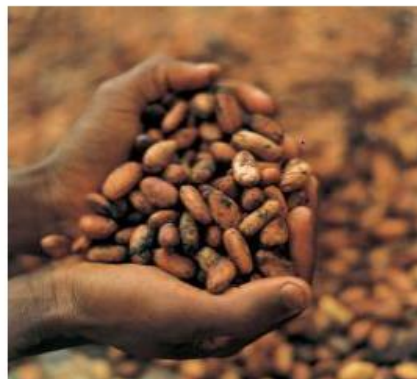
*A worker on cocoa farm*



*Drying cocoa*



*Cocoa boy at work*



*Pure cocoa beans*