

The Ostendorf archive: Cocoa since 1502

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The cocoa project of WAU and the Dutch cocoa industry recently acquired the Ostendorf Archive. Dr. F.W. Ostendorf was a breeder, who started work on cocoa around 1933 in the Dutch East Indies. He continued research on cocoa until the late 1960s. His archive is a substantial set of notes, memoranda and unpublished reports mainly on cocoa, but including some information on rubber, coffee and tea.

The most valuable part of this collection is the extensive cocoa bibliography, which covers the earliest publications on cocoa up until 1960. A crude estimate is that this collection concerns about 2500 meticulously annotated cards. Of about 400 references, he made very extensive extracts of a couple pages length. The cards and extracts are written in a very clear and punctual handwriting. It appears from the subjects covered by the extracts, that Ostendorf had a special interest for botanical aspects of cocoa, the explorers of the South American continent and their description of cocoa in the wild and the early history of cultivation. It is clear from all the notes that he had the intention to publish a book on the botany and agronomy of cocoa, which he never completed. He started writing this book during the camp years in Indonesia. Some chapters of this book have been typewritten already, whilst other chapters are drafted in steno. It appears that he continued this work until his death in the early 1970s.

The current status of the archive is not good. Time and the tropical environment have done their damage. Experts estimate that the paper will last only another 20-30 years before it is completely disintegrated. We are now seeking support and advice to preserve the archive and unlock the wealth of information for a larger audience. Electronic publishing on the Internet is one of our objectives. The inclusion of the bibliographic information along with our cocoa and chocolate bibliography will give a comprehensive overview of cocoa science and technology- a valuable resource base for cocoa scientists and the industry.

For further information

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