

# AID-FOR-TRADE CASE STORY

GERMANY

## Trade and Pro-Poor Growth: Introducing Rainforest Alliance Certification to Cocoa Production in Côte d'Ivoire

**Date of submission:** January 2011

**Region:** West Africa

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**Type:** Project, AfT category 2 (CRS code 25010)

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## **CASE STORY I**

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**Acronyms**

AfT	Aid for Trade
ANADER	National Agency for Rural Development
BDSI	Bundesverband der Deutschen Süßwarenindustrie
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CRS	Creditor Reporting System (OECD)
GBCC	Global Business Consulting Company
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German International Cooperation)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Technical Cooperation)
ICCO	International Cocoa Organization
ICS	Internal Control System
PPDC	Market-oriented Promotion of Certified Sustainable Cocoa Production in Côte d'Ivoire
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RA	Rainforest Alliance
SAN	Sustainable Agriculture Network
STCP	Sustainable Tree Crops Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Executive summary

The project *Market-oriented Promotion of Certified Sustainable Cocoa Production in Côte d'Ivoire (PPDC)* was designed as public-private partnership (PPP) between Kraft Foods and the cocoa trader Armajaro as private partners and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German Development Cooperation as public partners. The project was implemented from 2005-2009 with the objective of improving the living conditions of cocoa farmers.

In order to establish environmentally friendly and socially as well as economically sustainable cocoa production, and to link small-scale farmers to the high value export markets of Côte d'Ivoire, the project introduced the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) standard promoted by the Rainforest Alliance (RA). The standard looks at sustainability holistically, and guides farmers with respect to ten principles of sustainable agriculture. The cocoa farmers of six cooperatives in the main cocoa growing areas of the country were trained by the National Agency for Rural Development, ANADER, in agronomic practices aiming to raise the quantity and quality of the cocoa they produced. The RA's project coordinator provided additional training on the specific sustainability-related aspects of the standard. The cocoa was bought by Armajaro, in its capacity as an exporter, and sold to Kraft Foods. This then used the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal on its Côte d'Or chocolate brand once a supply line had been established. The overall project was managed by EDE Consulting.

At the beginning of the project a baseline survey was undertaken. In order to gauge the progress made, two impact assessments were conducted during the course of the project (Untied, 2007; Abel and Vogel, 2008 and 2009). The impact assessments looked holistically at the outcome and impact of the interventions. On the economic side, it was clearly established that trained cocoa farmers were able to increase both the quantity and quality of their cocoa. Within three years, 5,600 farmers from six cooperatives were trained. They delivered about 6,000 tonnes of certified cocoa (Abel and Vogel, 2009).

Assessing the improvement in the living conditions of the cocoa farmers and their families and workers was more difficult. Interviews with the target group showed that their living and working conditions had indeed improved (Abel and Vogel, 2009). Also, the worst cases of child labour and child trafficking were not encountered (Rainforest Alliance audit records).

Furthermore, the project led to a deeper understanding of the natural ecosystem. For the first time, shade trees were planted in cocoa fields, with their number finally rising to a total of 188,000 trees. Also for the first time, certain areas were marked for wildlife protection and security perimeters were established (Abel and Vogel, 2009).

By and large, the project fulfilled its set targets and was successful. This also proved to be the case once the project had ended, despite some initial fragility and loss of certification in the first year immediately thereafter. In 2010, all of the cooperatives re-applied for certification.

## 1. Issues addressed

Cocoa is one of the most important agricultural commodities traded worldwide. About 3.7 million tonnes were traded in 2007, reaching a value of USD 5.5 billion. The world cocoa market is notoriously volatile, especially due to weather-related production fluctuations and price speculation. Under the long-term trends forecasted, an annual increase in production of 5.6% is anticipated by 2012/13. Currently, an annual deficit of about 50,000 tonnes for high quality cocoa, in particular, has been recorded (ICCO, 2009).

Côte d'Ivoire accounts for about 37% of total world cocoa production, which amounted to 1,370 million tonnes in 2007/2008 (BDSI, 2009). Cocoa is the backbone of the Ivorian economy and is cultivated by about 800,000 cocoa farmers, mostly smallholders owning less than 3 hectares of land. The crop generates income for 6 million people directly and indirectly (Oxfam, 2009). The political situation in the country is fragile and poverty widespread. Violations relating to child labour and child trafficking have been a major issue (Hütz-Adams, 2010). The majority of cocoa farmers face a number of constraints, including weak organisations, low productivity, pests and diseases, quality problems (due to inadequate processing), poor infrastructure, and also with respect to marketing. Deforestation in the cocoa producing areas is also contributing to increased climate change at the micro and regional levels. All these problems tend to increase the level of poverty among farmers and their families.

At a global level, there is growing concern about irresponsible exploitation of land, human, and natural resources. Consumers and private sector agents around the world are increasingly becoming aware of sustainably produced products that observe basic social and environmental standards, and which offer new and/or additional market opportunities for cocoa farmers.

From November 2005 to March 2009, the public-private partnership project, *Market-oriented Promotion of Certified Sustainable Cocoa Production in Côte d'Ivoire (PPDC)*, was implemented. The main objective of the project was to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers through the production of sustainable Rainforest Alliance Certified™ cocoa. The project was financed by private partners, namely Kraft Foods and the cocoa trader, Armajaro, as well as public partners, i.e. the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and GTZ - the latter acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It is classified as Aid for Trade (AfT) category 2 "Trade Development" and got a CRS code 25010.

The project addressed, in particular, the issue of sustainability and its related economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It attempted to create a supply line of certified sustainable cocoa for Kraft Foods, and to pioneer sustainable cocoa production for the international market.

## 2. Objectives pursued

The purpose of this case study is to learn more about activities of relevance to Aid for Trade, their outcomes and impact, and in this particular instance, about production-related capacity building measures geared towards increasing trade.

The main objective of the project was to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers through the production of sustainable 'Rainforest Alliance Certified' cocoa. More specifically,

the project was to contribute to: i) better market access for smallholder farmers; ii) increasing the income of farm households; iii) improving the living and working conditions of cocoa farmers and their families and workers; iv) raising the opportunities for cocoa farmers to participate in the decision-making processes behind cocoa marketing; and to v) advancing the condition of the cocoa farmers' natural resources (Vogel, 2009a).

As per the project planning matrix, the following indicators were set at the beginning of the project in order to measure its success upon completion: a) the average farm income of the project farmers, and whether this has increased; b) audit reports provided by the certifiers indicating compliance with the sustainability standard by at least 80% of the groups checked; and c) how much certified sustainable cocoa the farmers can produce, i.e. are they able to supply a minimum amount of 4,000 tonnes by the time the project ends? Further indicators and milestones were set for the different capacity building-related activities of the project (e.g. as regards setting up management structures and procedures, preparing an assessment of gaps and children's needs, establishing technical guidelines, implementing capacity building workshops and training sessions, setting up demonstration plots, establishing a quality control system, and so forth).

### 3. Design and implementation

The project was designed as a PPP. It originated in the desire of Kraft Foods, the multinational partner, to secure a reliable supply of high quality cocoa and to respond to consumer concerns about protecting the environment and ensuring an adequate livelihood for the farming communities on which it depends. Kraft Foods was also the first mainstream company to make a commitment to supporting sustainable cocoa production through Rainforest Alliance certification. PPP funds thus came from the project's two private partners - Kraft Foods and the cocoa trader, Armajaro – as well as its public partners, namely GIZ (formerly GTZ)<sup>5</sup>, acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and USAID.<sup>6</sup> The project was actually implemented by EDE Consulting, the fund manager. Other implementing partners were the Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP), the Rainforest Alliance (through its Ivorian representative), the Global Business Consulting Company (GBCC) and the Ivorian extension agency ANADER, which provided training at the farmer group level.

The project encompassed capacity building measures in order to introduce the good agricultural practices required for output to be certified as sustainably produced cocoa. This involved, in the first place, incorporating sustainable practices into the training approach. It also required the setting up of an adequate organisation for training activities and the strengthening of participating cooperatives.

In order to achieve the application of practices that lead to sustainable production, the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) standard promoted by the Rainforest Alliance was introduced. This sustainability standard requires farmers to adjust their production processes according to ten principles: i) social and environmental management; ii) ecosystem conservation; iii) wildlife protection; iv) water conservation; v) fair treatment and good working

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<sup>5</sup> The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH was formed on 1 January 2011. It brings together the long-standing expertise of the Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (DED) gGmbH (German development service), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH (German technical cooperation) and InWEnt – Capacity Building International, Germany.

<sup>6</sup> Approximate funding: Kraft Foods: EUR 600,000; USAID: USD 600,000; BMZ (GIZ): EUR 300,000; Armajaro: USD 200,000.

conditions for workers; vi) occupational health and safety; vii) community relations; viii) integrated crop management; ix) soil management and conservation; and x) integrated waste management. The standard was incorporated into a set of instructions and tools for cocoa cultivation, and formed the core of a capacity building programme that was first disseminated through the training sessions for the ANADER trainers, who, in turn, trained the cocoa farmers of the six selected cooperatives. Additionally, GBCC trained these cooperatives in the specific sustainability-related aspects of the SAN standard. Project partners were also active in enhancing cooperation at the political level and in further fostering negotiations between exporters, traders, cooperatives and cocoa farmers.

At the beginning of the project, a set of baseline data was compiled that depicted the status of cocoa production, the livelihoods of cocoa farming households and labour conditions, as well as the environmental conditions for cocoa cultivation (Untied, 2007). Subsequently, a concept and set of hypotheses for an impact chain was developed, with two impact assessment studies then being conducted (Abel and Vogel, 2008 and 2009). These assessed the progress realised by the project, and made recommendations as to the corrective measures required. During the course of the assessment studies, farmers were interviewed. Changes in production were assessed by comparing data for those cocoa farmers participating in the project with that for their counterparts outside the project. Additionally, data was derived from the yields measured for the demonstration plots that were established during the project. Based on the final results, GTZ summarised the project outcomes and impact in a document containing essential facts and figures (Vogel, 2009).

In order to inform stakeholders and to ensure a high level of transparency, a special web site was established and a brochure on the project was also published. Furthermore, national meetings and presentations were held.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4. Problems encountered**

The project was the first of its kind to introduce a sustainability standard to cocoa production. A number of problems inevitably appeared. These concerned, on the one hand, 'simple' matters such as collecting the data required for an assessment, as well as matters of 'substance' connected to the actual content of the project. Resource constraints – time and money – were – not surprisingly – a final aspect of concern, as will be shown in the following paragraphs.

In order to gain evidence on project outcomes and impact, robust data needed to be collected. However, there were a number of limitations. More than half of the adult population of Côte d'Ivoire is illiterate, and even those farmers who know how to read and write rarely keep farm records. Therefore, much of the assessment depended on memory recall.

The biggest limitation was the short time frame of the project and the strong focus on production improvements. For instance, the SAN standard does not provide for more general capacity building, for example, as regards imparting more general management and business skills to cooperatives.

Also, certification relies on a strong internal control system (ICS), and the project appears not to have insisted enough on identifying a sufficient number of capable ICS members. Thus,

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<sup>7</sup> Please contact the GIZ for further details.

when the project ended, the situation was fragile with respect to the cooperatives continuing to comply with the sustainability requirements, leading to some cooperatives being de-certified just a year later.

Some of the agricultural practices implemented are deeply rooted. Cocoa is a cash crop and traditionally cultivated by men, while food crops are usually the responsibility of women. Substantial changes in gender roles cannot be expected to arise from a project with a time horizon of only three years, plus an approach that deals with gender as a 'side issue'.

Likewise, empowerment processes to strengthen, for example, the position of cooperative members in decision-making are also not likely achievable within a short period of time. Such matters would need a more holistic approach and a project term of a longer duration – for example, one that would allow for an application of the systematic capacity building measures for cooperatives which were beyond the scope of this project.

Finally, during the final year, the project proposed that it be extended for a few months in order to stabilise the success achieved. However, this did not in fact happen.

## **5. Factors for success and some failures**

The most important factor behind the project's success was the fact that it was designed as a public-private partnership. In the first place, this secured that cocoa production followed the direction needed by the market. Secondly, market access could be assured beforehand, given the commitment made by the private partners to purchase output, provided it was of the required quality. This gave farmers the security to invest their time and money in improved production technology.

Having said this, a big hindrance to success was the short time span of the project. Increasing production may be possible in a relatively short amount of time. However, effecting a durable change in the social and environmental aspects of sustainability usually needs more time and a broader approach to providing support. This would be possible, for example, under a larger rural development programme; one that not only addresses agricultural production and management needs, but also works in a more general way towards improvements in education, health, and natural resource management.

## **6. Results achieved**

Overall, the project achieved its set targets. The specific results and impact will now be further discussed looking at the three particular dimensions of sustainability, i.e. the economic, the social, and the environmental dimension.

### The economic dimension

An evaluation of the economic dimension revealed that farmers clearly experienced improved market access and also increased their income (Vogel, 2009b). Establishing stable commercial relationships and being more attractive to customers enhanced their opportunities for making a better living from cocoa production. Kraft Foods now uses the certified cocoa they produce in its premium chocolate brands Cote d'Or and Suchard, which can be purchased in many countries in Europe and North America (Henson, 2010). In general, the project was the first to introduce sustainability standards to the cocoa produced by small farmers and bringing certification into mainstream cocoa production.

Over three years, 5,600 farmers from six cooperatives were trained and, in turn, delivered some 6,000 tonnes of certified cocoa (Vogel, 2009b). The average cocoa production for farmers using sustainable practices was markedly higher at 761 kg/ha compared to 509 kg/ha for those using conventional methods. This corresponds to an increase in productivity of 49.5% (Vogel, 2009b). Furthermore, the farmers' improved bookkeeping practices facilitated the monitoring of their income, expenses and harvest. They could increase their income even more by stabilising the amount of certified cocoa delivered to the commercial partners, which guaranteed the payment of a premium. In addition, cocoa traders received a tax reduction for the certified cocoa they handled which was then passed on to the local farmers (GTZ, 2008).

The introduction of integrated pest management methods reduced the number of cocoa pods affected by black pod disease, a severe challenge throughout the entire region, by 35.6% (Vogel, 2009b). The farmers also improved their methods of cocoa production in terms of crop management, tree pruning, raising seedlings in nurseries and agroforestry, as a whole (Vogel, 2009a). Ultimately, both the quantity and quality of the cocoa produced increased. More of the cocoa marketed was of a better grade and thus received a higher price, which in turn meant a higher income for the farmers (Abel and Vogel, 2009). Overall, more than 50% of the cocoa delivered was of first grade quality – i.e. in terms of its good flavour, colour, lack of foreign matter, low moisture content, and so forth (Abel and Vogel, 2009).

The economic dimension of sustainability thus improved significantly. The good practices applied by the farmers and the cocoa traceability introduced impressed traders, creating trust in the cooperatives and leading to improved market access (Vogel, 2009a). However, the majority of farmers acknowledged that significantly greater efforts and higher costs were involved than before.

#### The social dimension

Interviews with the target group showed that the living and working conditions of the farmers and their families and workers improved. Audits confirmed that all farmers had adequate housing and had built the same for their workers, with kitchens being separated from bedrooms. Farmer knowledge about all of the practical measures that can help improve living conditions had also increased. Interviewed farmers could explain with ease, for example, methods for treating drinking water, how hygiene measures should be applied, and how housing can be improved. Most farming households now treated water before it was consumed. Those which did not treat their water attributed this to financial difficulties or force of habit. While the farmers generally appreciated the training in hygiene and health, only a few saw the need for first aid kits (Abel and Vogel, 2009).

After the training sessions, the relationship between cocoa farmers and their workers improved significantly, despite most of the contracts agreed remaining verbal (Abel and Vogel, 2009). It must be noted, however, that only a few farmers employed workers.

The worst cases of child labour and child trafficking found in many cocoa growing areas in West Africa, including in Côte d'Ivoire, were not encountered within the six cooperatives covered by the project. In fact, they did not appear in any of the audit reports undertaken by the Rainforest Alliance.

Due to the awareness raising stimulated by the project among the cocoa farmers, the educational situation of children improved markedly, even to the point where schools became

overcrowded with children. Some children had to be sent away because of infrastructure deficiencies, prompting some parents to look for alternative learning opportunities (Abel and Vogel, 2009).

The project also tried to empower cocoa farmers and their cooperatives by helping them to get better organised, though this was mainly done indirectly. It appeared, for instance, that because of the training sessions in sustainable cocoa farming, cooperatives increased their membership by about 25%. It was also revealed that farmers were now better informed about cooperative meetings. Nonetheless, their involvement in decision-making was limited, as this remained in the hands of the cooperative chairman and board of directors. In addition, while there was no objection towards the freedom of association, no labour organisations existed or came into existence. This was due to the fact that most farmers were smallholders who did not employ workers and, thus, this matter was not really of relevance. Furthermore, although no discrimination against women was present, their participation was quite low and only increased marginally. Women farmers in Côte d'Ivoire traditionally deal with food crops, while cocoa, being a cash crop, is mainly cultivated by men (Abel and Vogel, 2009).

#### The ecological dimension

The project led to a deeper understanding of the natural ecosystem. Farmers and workers clearly stated that their knowledge had increased. For the first time, shade trees were planted, with their number finally rising to 188,000 trees (Vogel, 2009b). Also for the first time, certain areas were marked for wildlife protection and security perimeters were established, accordingly. Hunting also decreased to some extent.

After the project was launched, it was observed that wells were more often used in a correct manner. The surface water found in plantations was not any more or less often contaminated than before. Training on waste management was also highly welcomed. The statistics show that 75-90% of farmers subsequently adjusted their behaviour, in keeping with the waste management methods disseminated via training (Abel and Vogel, 2009). However, the farmers hardly practiced composting because this requires much more physical effort and consistent follow-up.

#### Beyond the project end

Production of certified sustainable cocoa continued to be viable after the project ended in 2008, despite some initial fragility. This development proved quite dynamic because farmers, traders and exporters were acting in a competitive environment to provide new opportunities for both farmers and traders, partly prompting a change in the relationships between cocoa sellers and cocoa buyers. In 2009, several cooperatives did not continue with certification because they opted to sell their output to traders that did not require certification and which also offered good prices. However, in the following year, 2010, when certification had become well-established in the international chocolate market, all re-applied for certification. Three of the cooperatives even obtained a second sustainability certificate on top of that issued by the Rainforest Alliance, hoping to expand the market for their output.

### **7. Lessons learnt**

A number of lessons were learnt from this project. These relate to methodological matters, such as whether the right indicators were set and could be followed, as well as much broader

issues. For example, the necessity of supporting production-related capacity building with complementary measures like strengthening cooperative organisations, promoting community development, or responding to health and environmental concerns.

The initial set of indicators, as per the project planning matrix (see Section 2), were useful and met by the project. The baseline survey and the impact assessment studies (Untied, 2007; GTZ, 2008; Abel and Vogel, 2008 and 2009) were certainly instrumental in getting an understanding, not only about project outputs and outcomes, but also about the project impact. These helped to keep track of the progress made and were used, in the first instance, to steer project activities and, in the second, to disseminate experiences beyond the project.

The indicators were also useful considering the project's Aid for Trade context, and when keeping in mind that it belonged to the *'trade development' category and clearly focused on capacity development*. The indicators clearly measured production of relevance to trade (tonnes of certified cocoa for export), and the capacity built, i.e. in terms of the number of farmers trained and their knowledge, as attested to by the certification process.

The project stands out for two key innovations: firstly, for introducing a sustainability standard to the cocoa industry; and secondly, for introducing such a standard – one previously developed for certifying the output of plantations and large-scale farms – to smallholder farmers clustered under the umbrella of a cooperative.

The authors would like to reiterate Henson's summary (2010) of the key lessons learnt under the PPDC project:

- “Interventions directed at certification of small-scale farmers in the context of a public-private partnership can be an effective mechanism to achieve linkages to higher-value international markets in a timely and relatively low risk manner.
- While interventions may focus directly on addressing the compliance challenges faced by value chains, it is important also to address wider challenges, for example the quality and availability of support services, tax regimes, etc. These broader challenges can be critical to the ultimate success of the intervention.
- Beneficiaries along the value chain must perceive and experience appreciable change in order to engender commitment. This applies not only to small-scale farmers, but also (to) upstream value chain actors.
- While interventions may be narrowly focused on a particular value chain, and even linkages to specific buyers, processes of upgrading can have far wider outcomes, for example in terms of broader market access, improvements in productivity, etc. This is a key finding, since one concern with public-private partnerships is that they can engender the dependency of small-scale farmers on single (and often powerful) international market buyers.
- Local ownership of processes of upgrading is critical, including not only farmers, but also government officials, service providers, etc. Key here is perceptions of some degree of influence or power over the direction of capacity-building processes, such that the associated outcomes and impacts are seen to flow from the efforts of the target beneficiaries.”

In addition to the above, it is felt that support with certification needs to be more holistic in order to create lasting structures. Apart from training sessions in sustainable production and compliance, there is a need for capacity building regarding community empowerment and the management of a farmer organisation. Aside from working through cooperatives – as was the case in this project – other approaches might prove good alternatives, for example, outgrower schemes for cocoa smallholders connected to a large cocoa plantation or embedded services for extension and credit provided by traders around cocoa trading points.

## **8. Conclusions (applicability to other programmes)**

Sustainable agricultural production with quantitative and qualitative improvements that help reduce costs and expand market access is in the interest of farmers, traders, processors, and consumers. Securing production in the long run is also in the interest of all the actors involved in the value chain. Thus, there is a potential 'win-win' situation here. However, helping the main partners to meet and to find a mutually beneficial way forward, as well as to build trust between farmers (the produce sellers) and traders/exporters (the produce buyers) is not an easy task; one which requires some mediation and facilitation between the parties involved. This can be done well by public partners who may also assist in the negotiations for more favourable framework conditions at the macro level, if necessary. Voluntary sustainability standards, such as the SAN standard, have proven to successfully transmit the concept of 'sustainability' into the daily lives of small farmers.

The PPDC project presented here has certainly been a good model for past initiatives and will remain important for future ones. For instance, its experience was used by a public-private partnership project in Ecuador where cocoa production was also the subject of Rainforest Alliance certification. A second example is the still on-going Certification Capacity Enhancement project related to sustainable cocoa farming in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria. This project involves three standards, i.e. 'Fairtrade', 'Utz Certified' and the 'SAN standard' promoted by the Rainforest Alliance. Last, but not least, the Cocoa Livelihoods Program shall be mentioned in cooperation with World Cocoa Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Now operational in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, this has benefitted from the PPDC project's experience of facilitating public-private partnership arrangements. In all mentioned projects GIZ acts as project partner on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Apart from cocoa, the project can also be a good model for schemes supporting other agricultural commodities; ones sharing similar characteristics, i.e. high value export commodities requiring high product quality, and serving consumers who are already conscious, or becoming conscious, of social and environmental concerns.

Using a public-private partnership arrangement was certainly effective. However, in the future, it would be good if such a project could be closely linked to, or even part of, a larger rural development programme; one that also addresses capacity development as regards community development, education, health, and natural resource management, and which is of a medium- to long-term duration. This would be the ideal situation.

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