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DEFINING FINE OR FLAVOUR CACAO QUALITY IN LOCAL CONTEXTS

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The international cocoa market has legitimized “fine or flavour” cocoa through the International Cocoa Convention (ICC). Since the signing of the first ICC, there has been no clear framework defining what “fine or flavour” quality is, what determines it, how it is produced, or how it should be evaluated. This has sparked an ongoing debate about the factors responsible for the tastes and aromas that characterize fine flavor cocoa. Behind the organoleptic attributes prioritized in this differentiation lies a set of collective resources that are activated through the coordination among various actors.

This paper examines how the quality of fine flavor cocoa results from processes of territorial re-signification that link local production dynamics with the demands of specialized global markets. Based on three case studies —Casfa, Rayen, and Finca La Rioja— in the Soconusco region of Chiapas, Mexico, it was identified that value creation strategies emerge from differentiated productive practices,

cultural narratives, and commercial relationships. Using a qualitative methodology based on ethnography, including field observation and interviews (conducted between 2019 and 2022), the study demonstrates that fine flavor cocoa is more than a technical category; it is a social construct rooted in territory and in the contestation over the symbolic and economic value of origin.

Palavras-chave: quality; valorization; collective resources; actors; territory.