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| **Abstract / Content summary** | The Pacific countries of Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu account for less than 2% of the world’s cacao dry bean production. To capitalise on the rapidly expanding origin craft cocoa market, understanding the genetic attributes of Theobroma cacao in the Pacific is essential. A six-year ACIAR-funded project collected 1647 dried leaf samples from research stations and smallholder farms to identify the population ancestry of T. cacao in the partner countries. Using SNP marker profiling, the study identified germplasm high in Amelonado, which represents the majority of material throughout the Pacific. However, the study also identified samples high in the remaining nine genetic groups, including Criollo, Nanay, IMC (Iquitos), Guiana, Parinari (Marañón), Nacional, Ucayali (Contamana), LCT EEN (Curaray), and Purus, which were distributed throughout the Pacific. The results, if utilised in local selection trials, could reposition growers in the Pacific countries, allowing them to supply the growing origin craft cocoa market, with genetically unique beans. Cocoa genetics was one aspect of a project incorporating production and postharvest research to refocus the commodity based cocoa industry to a supplier of high-quality beans of unique Pacific cocoa
origin to the rapidly expanding craft ‘bean to bar’ cocoa industry.
Keywords: Cacao; cocoa; chocolate; Pacific; SNP markers; genetic attributes; diversity; craft origin; production; growers
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