



United Cacao loses libel case against ConfectioneryNews

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A Cayman Islands-registered company allegedly tied to deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon has lost a libel case against ConfectioneryNews and its publisher.

The first-degree tribunal of Paris ruled in ConfectioneryNews' favor on November 30, 2016.

The Court of Appeal in Paris said on April 4, 2017, the period for appeal had expired.

Allegations of deforestation

United Cacao Limited SEZC – a company aiming to create the world's largest pure-play cocoa plantation in Tamshiyacu, Peru – accused ConfectioneryNews' publisher William Reed, its managing director and journalist Oliver Nieburg of defamation for two articles published in early 2015.

The article 'Did United Cacao destroy Amazon rainforest to clear path for world's largest cocoa plantation?' presented interviews with local residents and NGOs alleging United Cacao and its subsidiary Cacao del Peru Norte SAC cleared primary Amazonian Rainforest to make way for its cocoa estate.

The article 'United Cacao continues infrastructure work despite injunction, claims NGO' detailed images taken by local NGO Sociedad Peruana de Ecodesarrollo

(SPDE) purporting to show United Cacao working its land in breach of a suspension order from the Peruvian government.

‘Justified’ by good faith

The Paris tribunal said ConfectioneryNews’ reports were justified as they were made in good faith and pursued a legitimate aim.

The court ordered United Cacao to pay costs.

In January this year, United Cacao secured close to \$700,000 of new capital, but was automatically delisted from the Alternative Investment Market of the London Stock Exchange AIM on February 6, 2017.

Over 60 indigenous organizations and NGOs from Peru, Europe, and the United States **called for** United Cacao’s removal from the AIM in May last year alleging “*illegal clear-cutting of Peruvian rainforests*”.

United Cacao said in a **press release** on February 6 this year: “*The Board continues to work to secure further funding to address its constrained financial situation and there is no assurance that such further financing will be raised to meet the company's ongoing liabilities.*”

United Cacao’s former chairman and CEO Denis Melka resigned from the company on January 4 this year, a day after the company’s directors sought “**immediate termination**” of his employment.

The company’s website is no longer active.