

# English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

## Articles of the week



## Indonesia's cocoa farmers work with businesses to fight the bitter impact of climate change



By VICTORIA MILKO and DITA ALANGKARA Associated Press

TANJUNG REJO, Indonesia (AP) — The loud whirr of a chainsaw sounds through the forest as a small group of farmers gathers around a tree filled with red seed pods. With one slow stroke, a severed

knobby branch hits the ground.

“Now it will help the tree grow new fruit,” farmer Tari Santoso says with a smile.

Thousands of cocoa farmers across Indonesia like Santoso are working with businesses and other organizations to protect their crops from the bitter impacts of climate change and underinvestment that have pushed cocoa prices to record levels.

Cocoa trees are high maintenance: Grown only near the equator, they require a precise combination of steady temperatures, humidity and sunlight. It takes five years for a tree to start producing the seeds that are processed into cocoa used to make chocolate and other delectable foods.

Climate change raises the risks for farmers: Hotter weather hurts yields and longer rainy seasons trigger the spread of fungus and deadly pests. Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns have made it harder for farmers to deal with those challenges.

So farmers are switching to other crops, further reducing cocoa supplies and pushing prices higher: In 2024, prices nearly tripled, reaching about US\$12,000 per ton, driving up chocolate costs and leading some chocolate makers to try growing cocoa in laboratories.

Indonesia is the third-largest producer of cocoa in the world, behind Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, farmers are joining with businesses and nongovernmental organizations to develop better growing practices and improve their livelihoods.

Sitting in the shade of his forest farm in south Sumatra, 3 miles (5 kilometers) from a national park where Sumatran tigers and rhinos roam, farmer Santoso is working with Indonesian chocolate maker Krakakoa.

After he began working with the company in 2016, Santoso started using practices that helped his cocoa trees flourish, regularly pruning and grafting new branches onto older trees to promote growth and prevent the spread of disease. He is using organic fertilizer and has adopted agroforestry techniques, integrating other crops and trees such as bananas, dragon fruit, coffee and pepper, into his farm to foster a healthier ecosystem and invest in other income sources.

“It wasn't very successful before we met Krakakoa,” Santoso said. “But then, we received training ... things are much better.”

Krakakoa has trained more than 1,000 cocoa farmers in Indonesia according to its founder and CEO, Sabrina Mustopo. The company also provides financial support.

Santoso and other farmers in Sumatra said the partnership helped them to form a cooperative provides low-interest loans to farmers, with interest paid back into the cooperative rather than to banks outside of the community.

Cocoa farmers who need bigger loans from government-owned banks also benefit from partnering with businesses, as the guaranteed buyer agreements can provide collateral needed to get loans approved, said Armin Hari, a communications manager at the Cocoa Sustainability Partnership, a forum for public-private collaboration for cocoa development in Indonesia.

Dozens of other businesses, the government and nongovernmental organizations and cooperatives are also working with cocoa farmers to better cope with climate change, benefiting thousands, Hari said. He pointed to a collaboration between Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency and

the local division of international chocolate maker Mars, which have released a new variant of cocoa that produces more pods per tree.

Challenges still remain, said Rajendra Aryal, the FAO's country director for Indonesia. Fewer people see cocoa farming as a lucrative business and instead are planting other crops such as palm oil. And many small-scale farmers still cannot get loans, he said.

But Aryal said he hopes that continued collaboration between farmers and others will help.

"If we can look at the major issues these (farmers) are facing ... I think this sector could be, again, very attractive to the farmers," he said. "Despite the challenges in Indonesia, I see that there are opportunities."

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## In the rapidly shifting world of work, many employees are unclear what's expected of them

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By CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Nikelle Inman started a new job coaching first-generation college students, she looked forward to meeting with them one-on-one to talk about how to surmount obstacles and find resources to succeed.

Instead, she and her fellow success coaches at a community college in North Carolina spent a year mired in paperwork, tasked with reviewing applications from aspiring undergraduates. They never did get to meet with students.

"Admissions work kind of took over what we were supposed to do," Inman, 34, said. "I felt disengaged with the position, more so because I just didn't feel valued."

It's disorienting when a job turns out to be completely different than advertised or morphs into something we didn't expect. But more U.S. workers have reported feeling disconnected from their organization's purpose and unclear on how to meet expectations since the coronavirus pandemic changed the way we work, according to a new Gallup analysis.

Just under half of U.S. employees who participated in a Gallup survey in November “strongly agreed” that they know what is expected of them at work, which is one of the factors the polling firm uses to measure employee engagement. In January 2020, the figure stood at 56%.

The new survey showed that new employees, younger employees, people in white-collar industries like technology, insurance and finance, and those in hybrid work arrangements were especially likely to report that expectations for their roles weren't clear.

The findings make intuitive sense. Managers and employees have bushwhacked their way through disruptive changes since COVID-19 first upended public life five years ago. In late 2024, about one-quarter of employees with the ability to work remotely were doing so exclusively, up from around 1 in 10 in 2019, Gallup found. Another 55% were working in the office some days and remotely the rest, according to the 2024 data, up from about one-third in 2019.

More recently, layoffs at tech companies and in the government and other sectors have left organizations with fewer people to handle the load, and expectations aren't always adjusted to the new realities.

“With all the rounds of layoffs, people's scope and responsibilities are shifting constantly,” said Jeremy Guttenplan, an executive leadership trainer and coach based in New York. “You think about the ones left behind and the work is just getting piled on them.”

Here are some strategies for eliminating confusion when the scope and responsibilities of a job are ambiguous.

### **Establish expectations early**

Spell out or make sure you understand what a new role or project entails — along with any relevant deadlines or performance markers — from the beginning so everyone agrees on what's realistic and wanted. Writing it down in a shared document can help prevent future misunderstandings.

When a successful real estate developer asked Amber Krasinski to film and produce 85 TikTok videos in three hours, she thought hard about whether she really wanted to take him on as a client. The job might be good exposure for her communications agency, IvyHill Strategies, but Krasinski knew it would be impossible to complete in so little time. She turned it down.

Krasinski regularly gives her client progress updates and tries to make a practice of asking clarifying questions before taking on new projects.

“Any time I have a conversation with a prospective client, I have that in the back of my mind,” Krasinski said. “Avoiding that people-pleasing side that says, 'You can figure it out, you can do it.' You don't want to let anybody down, but you also need to set yourself up for success.”

### **Seek frequent feedback**

No one wants to spend all day in meetings. But more frequent check-ins with a manager or supervisor may help staff members who are unsure if they are prioritizing their time appropriately or don't know what they are supposed to be doing.

Organizations can explore different ways of building connection between employees and providing more opportunities for feedback, which can result in better understanding of workplace expectations. Brian Smith, founder and managing partner of IA Business Advisors, said his company hosts gratitude sessions for 30 minutes each week.

The first 20 minutes are led by a coach who advises attendees on issues such as how to effectively manage time or deal with challenging customers. Highlighting specific problems and strategies can help workers understand what's expected of them. At the end of the session, participants have an opportunity to share what they're grateful for.

### **Start the conversation**

Workers don't have to wait for a supervisor to seek feedback or clarify expectations. You can suggest a quick check-in at any point, if you're unsure how to prioritize long-term goals or short-term deadlines,

"Managing upwards is going to make your life easier," said Dale Whelehan, founder of 4 Day World, a think tank that explores new models of work. "Don't assume that management has all the answers. They're probably just as lost."

However, in hierarchical organizations where questioning management may be viewed negatively, it's important to be delicate, he said.

To initiate a feedback discussion, you can ask to meet with a manager about a current project. Whelehan outlined how to approach the conversation if the meeting gets scheduled. Start by sharing what you understand your assignment to be. Then request the manager's confirmation or clarification by saying something such as, "I just want to make sure that there's alignment here," he advised.

Ask about anything else you need to clarify and close out the conversation by saying, "From what I understand from this conversation, my role is this. ... Have I understood that correctly?" Follow up with an email restating what you agreed to, Whelehan said.

### **Trust your instincts**

With workplaces experiencing so many changes, employees can find themselves jumping from one assignment to the other, distracted by new responsibilities picked up after colleagues were laid off, or adjusting to spending more time physically in the office.

If it all feels too chaotic, take a moment to pause. Revisit your priorities. And then work on the most important task.

"If something doesn't feel right, don't just accept it," Inman said. "Whatever that avenue is, if it's staying and trying to make it better or leaving, just don't give up on what you know is right."

Have you overcome an obstacle or made a profound change in your work? Send your questions and story ideas to [cbussewitz@ap.org](mailto:cbussewitz@ap.org). Follow AP's Be Well coverage, focusing on wellness, fitness, diet and mental health at <https://apnews.com/hub/be-well>.

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