

PRONATEC reports a clean bill of health for its organic cocoa beans

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The assessment carried out in September 2023 shows no pesticide cases in PRONATEC's organic cocoa butter, mass and powders. Pic: PRONATEC

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The family-owned company has been processing cocoa beans into cocoa mass, butter, and powder at its own exclusively organic plant in Winterthur, Switzerland, since June 2022 and says an assessment carried out this month shows there have been no pesticide cases in the semi-finished cocoa products since production started.

According to PRONATEC, this is primarily because the company's new plant is purely organic, so any mixing with conventional products can be completely ruled out.

Another contributing factor has been the strict cocoa bean analysis procedures developed by the company. These allow the company to detect even raw materials with minimal traces of residues with utmost reliability and exclude them from the production process. In the cocoa processing industry, organic and conventional products are usually processed on the same production line, which can lead to mixing and induce high follow-up costs.

During this first year of production, all products of PRONATEC Swiss Cocoa Production were subjected to extensive testing. An evaluation carried out in September now confirms the advantages of the exclusively organic production plant, it said.

No pesticide cases have been detected in the products the company has processed since production started, it claimed. This is even though the volume of beans processed has increased by around 80% over the same period. *"The fact that we have not had a single pesticide case validates our decision to go for a purely organic plant,"* said David Yersin, PRONATEC'S CEO and company owner, *"There is no mixing with conventional products here. Now people can see the benefits in black and white."*

So far, the Swiss family-owned company has produced approximately 7,000 tons of organic semi-finished cocoa products. PRONATEC also runs its own subsidiary company in the Dominican Republic, where it sources most of the cocoa beans it processes, allowing it to optimise the quality of the beans and prevent any mixing with conventional raw materials.

Small-scale farmers

It said that from procuring the beans from small-scale farmers through fermentation and export to processing and sale of the finished product, all stages of the process are in its own hands.

"Many processors have the problem that their pesticide analysis of the raw materials does not match the analysis of the processed products," said Samuel Hanimann, Head of Quality Management. *"Problematic raw materials are not reliably detected, leading to significantly higher follow-on costs if the residues are only detected at the semi-finished product stage. PRONATEC has developed a process that produces very accurate and representative results, and this is reflected in higher product quality."*

From 2024, PRONATEC's cocoa products will also be available with the US Regenerative Organic Certified (ROC) label. ROC uses internationally recognised organic labels as a baseline. From there, it adds essential requirements for soil health, animal welfare, and fair terms for farmers.