



Pronatec claims continued organic Swiss cocoa processing breakthrough

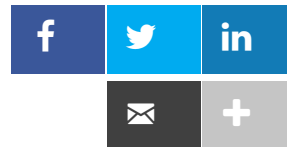


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Swiss firm Pronatec has reported strong progress with processing cocoa beans organically, with analysis of its crops finding no instances of pesticides in its semi-finished products, writes Neill Barston. As previously reported by Confectionery Production, last summer, the company became was is believed to be the first-of-its kind in the sector within its home nation, gaining widespread media coverage.

The business has reported that its apparent success has been down to its plant's pure organic status, ruling out mixing with conventional products. 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.

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 Pronatec's own hands. From

2024, the company'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 important requirements for soil health, animal welfare and fair terms for farmers.

During its first year of production, its products were subjected to extensive testing. An evaluation carried out in September now confirms the advantages of the exclusively organic production plant: There have been no pesticide cases detected in the products the company has processed itself since production started.

This is despite the fact 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," says the delighted CEO and company owner, David Yersin.

"There is no mixing with conventional products here. Now people can see the benefits in black and white." So far, Pronatec Swiss Cocoa Production has produced approximately 7000 tons of organic semi-finished cocoa products. Extremely meticulous analysis of the cocoa beans and a specially developed analytical procedure have contributed to this outstanding result. "Many processors have the problem that their pesticide analysis of the raw materials does not match the analysis of the processed products," explains Samuel Hanimann, Head of Quality Management. "Problematic raw materials are not reliably detected and lead 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." The representative analysis also ensures that the limit values for heavy metals such as cadmium in chocolate and cocoa products are not exceeded.

Because it has its own subsidiary company in the Dominican Republic, which is the source of most of the cocoa beans it processes, the company has been able over the past few years to optimise the quality of the cocoa beans and prevent any mixing with conventional raw materials.

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