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Pronatec claims first 100% organic Swiss cocoa processing with key industry venture



pic: Pronatec

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A major industry breakthrough is being claimed by Swiss firm Pronatec, which has completed initial tests on the country's first 100% organic cocoa processing plant in Beringen near Schaffhausen, writes Neill Barston.

As Confectionery Production has previously covered, with ongoing significant concerns surrounding cocoa sustainability in core West African markets of Ghana and Ivory Coast, industry has continued to seek out means of delivering environmentally sourcing of cacao for confectionery markets.

Consequently, Pronatec Swiss Cocoa Production has emerged as an entirely organic production plant and will process around 15,000 tonnes of organic cocoa beans a year, sourced from smallholder cooperatives. It is believed to be the first production plant in Switzerland to make all three semi-finished products: cocoa mass, cocoa butter and cocoa powder. "More and more consumers are not only looking for sustainable products but wanting to know exactly where the ingredients come from.

"This production plant is our response to that trend," says David Yersin, CEO and Swiss organic and fair trade pioneer. Full traceability, transparent production Having its own cocoa-processing plant means 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 value added chain are now in Pronatec's hands. Thanks to its unique direct-sourcing system, every product can be traced back to the cocoa-growing smallholder.

Furthermore, all the semi-finished cocoa products are processed in strictly separated batches: each consignment of beans is handled separately, with no mixing up with preceding or subsequent production runs. This enables the plant to meet the strict criteria for organic and fair trade certification.

"Demand from the market is confirming the trend towards stricter labels such as Bio Suisse and Demeter. Our products help to meet that need," adds David Yersin. As Pronatec adds, Swiss Cocoa Production specialises in meeting the most exacting organic and fair trade certification standards and delivers to customers in the food and chocolate industries around the world. Its cocoa butter is also very much in demand from manufacturers of natural cosmetics.

The plant, which has its own laboratory, is in the process of FSSC 22000 certification and guarantees the highest food safety and quality standards. In addition to its own beans, Pronatec also processes its customers' beans under contract (tolling).