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AGRICULTURE

Sustainable sugar targeted

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Mitr Phol, Thailand's top sugar producer, is increasing the amount of sugar it produces that meets the Bonsucro global standards as it seeks certification to avoid being accused of environmental devastation or labour exploitation.

Mitr Phol Group chief operating officer Buntoeng Vongkusolkit said the company has around 20,000 rai of sugar cane plantations that meet Bonsucro standards, which it hopes to increase to 40,000 rai in 2021 and 400,000 rai in the future.

That would account for around 20% of the company's total plantations of 2 million rai across the country, he said.

"This year is the first year the company has produced sugar for clients that require Bonsucro standards," said Mr Buntoeng.

Global companies who are Mitr

Phol clients and Bonsucro members include Unilever, Ferrero and Coca-Cola.

Bonsucro is a global multi-stakeholder organisation founded in 2008 to oversee global sugar industry standards. It awards certificates to members who meet its stringent criteria, which focus on human rights, social responsibility and economic viability.

In order to gain Bonsucro certification, prospective members must be verified at every stage of the production process, from farm to factory and even to end-users.

Factories that seek certification must prove that the land used for growing sugar cane did not involve deforestation and demonstrate that its workers have a good working environment.

Mr Buntoeng said Thailand, the world's second biggest sugar exporter after Brazil, is expected to produce around 110 million tonnes of sugar cane in the current 2016/17.