SINGLE MARKET OFFER FOR CERTIFICATION IN THE SUGARCANE SECTOR

Project duration: May to December 2017

Two of the biggest names in sugarcane certification, Bonsucro and Fairtrade, have come together to research and pilot a joint standard – with the help of the ISEAL Innovations Fund. Sven Sielhorst, Director of Global Programmes at Bonsucro, explains more about this joint venture and what it entails.

How did this project come about?

Recent reforms in the European Union have eliminated production quotas of beet sugar, which we expect to have a profound effect on sugarcane producers and smallholder farmers. Accordingly, Fairtrade is looking for ways to develop attractive propositions for industrial buyers and end users. Bonsucro standards already have broad acceptance by major industrial buyers, but achieving Bonsucro certification is challenging in production environments dominated by small-scale growers. This is a combined venture to try to mitigate the effects of the EU reforms by using the Bonsucro platform to add scale, and the Fairtrade system to bring in smallholder farmers.

How will it work?

Our goal is to develop, test and validate a comprehensively planned pilot to assess the opportunities and viability of a joint intervention between Bonsucro and Fairtrade (and potentially others). The pilot will help us establish joint audit protocol that maximises both sugarcane production sustainability standards, and a holistic approach to improving sustainability and productivity in the supply chain that can be ‘sold’ to industrial customers, brands, end users and retail customers.
Our research and recommendations will serve to inform other ISEAL members and standards bodies, as well as market actors, on the advantages and disadvantages of coordination, operational research findings on how it can be done, and lessons learnt in the process.

If/when the pilot determines that the joint market-facing proposition is feasible and market viable, it could be rolled out to any of the over 100 countries around the world that grow sugarcane, utilise standards and seek to improve farmer performance. There are a number of other agricultural ingredients where the potential and need for complementarity between Fairtrade and mainstream industry standards is equally present. We think the scalability is immense and opportunities endless.

**Why did you apply to the ISEAL Innovations Fund?**

It is one thing to work on a discrete one-off project with another organisation, but quite another to think about a partnership, particularly one that could (ideally) be long-term and self-sustaining. To do something like this, you need the resources and capacity to support it. The fund gave us freedom to explore this joint venture within the scope of our day jobs, as well as to bring in external support when needed.

**What lessons have you learned so far?**

It is important to take time at the beginning to properly understand the perspective of the project partner and address any concerns early on. We perhaps rushed through this during the application so that we could start the ‘real work’ of the project, and it slowed us down later. That said, we discovered other possible collaborations with our project partner in the process, so it was all worth it!

“**By carrying out market research and developing an approach for a single market offer between Bonsucro and Fairtrade, we will be able to facilitate smallholder producer improvements through greater access to major supply chains.”**

Sevn Sielhorst, Director of Global Programmes, Bonsucro

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Find out more about the ISEAL Innovations Fund at [www.isealliance.org/fund](http://www.isealliance.org/fund).

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