

ISCC PLUS Certified Sugar Enters the Food Market – An Example from Latin America

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Cristóbal Roda Vaca,
President Aguaí

Ingenio Sucroalcoholero Aguaí, the sixth and newest sugar mill in Bolivia, has implemented sustainability throughout their whole supply chains for sugar. Certified under ISCC EU since 2012, the company has expanded its sustainability certification to ISCC PLUS, enabling them to not only supply the biofuels market with sustainable products but also deliver their sustainably produced material to the food, feed and chemical market. Cristóbal Roda Vaca, CEO of *Aguaí*, points out *“The efforts made by Aguaí have been backed by norms like ISCC PLUS, because they support the work we do, and encourage us to continue to pursue the well-being of all our stakeholders. With ISCC we have set ourselves apart as an example to our community, as the leaders in environmental and human rights protection.”*

The company has just produced its first ISCC certified sugar for the food market. *“We are proud to say that we have been implementing, supervising and maintaining our ISCC certification since 2012, and that we are contributing with sustainability through our own operations as well as through the change of mind of our suppliers”*, says Lely Antelo

from *Aguaí*. *Aguaí’s* prime motivation for certification lies within doing things differently by adding value to society. They are the first sugar/ethanol plant in Bolivia to certify their production based on the ISCC sustainability standard.

The ISCC certifications contribute to their vision *“to produce sugar and ethanol in the best technical conditions without affecting the environment.”* By doing so, they also contribute and promote good reforestation, crop rotation practices, and proper use of chemicals.



ISCC Logo on all sugar bags
differentiates the product in the local
market

Pressing ecological and social sustainability issues in Bolivia

There are major issues with respect to sugarcane production in Bolivia. Farmers are burning their sugarcane fields to ease the manual harvesting methods. The smoke contaminates the environment, making the air in the city barely breathable around the traditional crushing season. Child labor is another concern. Traditionally, entire families from the countryside work on the sugar plantations, bringing their children to work, depriving them from a proper education and good growing conditions. Further, so-called “Zafreiros” - people who manually

harvest the cane – barely have the minimum conditions to work safely, and hardly ever have proper insurance and other protections which are required by law.

To address and work against the above depicted issues, *Aguaí* has adopted respective policies, which are embedded throughout their decisions, processes and business partners and which reflect the shareholder's vision and desire of building a sustainable company from the ground up.



Lely Antelo, Aguaí

Aguaí does not accept pre-harvest sugarcane field burning for its supplies in its mills. They have requested their big suppliers to make investments in machinery for harvest and transportation to the mill. *“For small and medium suppliers, we have gotten them cheap hiring of services to perform the harvesting and transportation for them”*, explains Lely Antelo. Further, *Aguaí* prohibits the hiring of children at their own company as well as at their supplier companies. In case their suppliers have children in their working camps, *Aguaí* asks them to make sure that they have access to and receive proper education. Labour rights are also widely addressed and have to be 100% compliant with local laws. As Lely Antelo states:

“We require our suppliers to provide long-term or temporary registered legal contracts and provide housing and food conditions with appropriate standards.”

Benefits from ISCC certification

At the environmental level, a main benefit is the prohibition of burning sugar cane, an agricultural practice very common in the region, that has given way to an uncontrolled and poorly regulated mean of air pollution, having a negative impact on public health.

Socially, the benefits of an ISCC certification in the supplier's fields are evident. Cane farms are working as proper companies under optimal working conditions for its workers, optimizing resources and maintaining an excellent standard of living for its people. As Emilio Colamarino, Santo Domingo Farm Owner and Shareholder of *Aguaí*, puts it: *“A well-paid worker, living under optimal conditions, with a proper home and medical assistance, is a happy worker that does not consider his job a ‘job’. He will always perform well, and will spread the happiness to his peers.”*

In economic terms, ISCC EU has opened the doors for a mill like *Aguaí*, allowing them to export most of the ethanol produced. Thanks to ISCC PLUS, their second product (sugar) is also more attractive to larger corporations who value and *only* accept products that derive from a proven sustainable production, such as *Aguaí*'s. Through the ISCC Logo on all of the sugar bags produced, *Aguaí* differentiates its product in the local market leading to improved sales opportunities.

By protecting the environment and giving priority to the social wellbeing of its workers and surroundings, *Aguaí* has set itself as the *first* and *only sustainable* mill in Bolivia through the ISCC norm. They produce with clear goals in mind, mindset that sets them apart as an example in their industry.

ISCC PLUS in short

ISCC PLUS is ISCC's certification scheme for all types of agricultural and alternative feedstocks and their derived products in the food, feed, bioplastic and chemical markets. With ISCC PLUS high requirements on sustainable production of feedstocks and traceability through the supply chain can be verified. On production level this includes zero-deforestation, the protection of biodiversity, preservation of carbon sinks and the compliance with good agricultural practice and human and social rights. In the further supply chain traceability (e.g. mass balance approach) is one of the focal points of certification. System users can additionally customize their certification by getting certified against so-called "add-ons", such as Environmental Management and Biodiversity, Classified Chemicals, Non-GMO or Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Requirements. ISCC PLUS supports and works with numerous initiatives to enable and promote sustainable food, feed and biochemical supply chains, such as the Consumer Goods Forum, Declaration of Abu Dhabi, Green Deal, IDH, INRO and SAI. ISCC PLUS is also accepted by Unilever under the Unilever SAC. Learn more at www.iscc-system.org.

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