

BM partners with sustainable and ethical chocolate brand

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Workplace catering company BM has partnered with Islands Chocolate – as part of a move to continue to improve sustainability and traceability in its chocolate supply chain.

The company will use Islands products across the business, including its cooking and drinking chocolates, as well as offering snack bars to customers onsite.

Islands makes chocolate from cocoa grown on its farms in St Vincent. It won a three-star Great Taste Award in 2019 and has been used widely by Michelin-starred restaurants such as Claude Bosi Sat Bains, The Hand & Flowers, Muse, Marcus and Pollen Street Social.

Islands retains control of its entire production and supply chain and all its cocoa is GPS-mapped, meaning every bag can be traced back to the farm on which it was grown. The business pays its field staff 7x more than Fairtrade's recommended rates and farmers are provided with financial security through guaranteed contracts for their cocoa as well as interest-free loans for pruning and fertilising.

Meanwhile, the cocoa is grown as responsibly as possible using sustainable agricultural principles. For example, cocoa is only grown on agricultural land, generally old banana farms. Foliar sprays are avoided, and the company has a low input fertiliser policy.

The forests are kept diversified by planting short cycle crops such as banana, citrus fruits, ginger and nuts until the cocoa plants are viable, and timber such as coconut and mahogany are also grown to provide shade for the cocoa, while also providing alternative, diversified revenue sources for farmers. And each cocoa plant is grown as an individual tree and planted in its own square metre terrace so there is no risk of erosion.

Pete Redman, chef director at BM, said: “We’re aware of some of the sustainability and ethical issues in the supply chain of chocolate, and we are looking at ways in which we can work more closely with growers to mitigate against these. We are on a journey and partnering with Islands makes a lot of sense.

“It’s a small, family-owned company that shares our values and their impact on communities is important to them, as ours is to us. We look forward to working with Islands and continually improving our CSER credentials while also raising awareness of how the foodservice sector can do better in this area.”

Zander Millar, associate director, Islands Chocolate, said: “It is a real pleasure to be working with BM to drive positive change in the contract catering world by offering chocolate with a truly traceable supply chain. In an industry filled with endemic issues such as child labour and mass deforestation, we are pleased to be producing a chocolate free of all of that.

“Pete and the BM team have been huge supporters of us and we feel very fortunate to be working with them as they lead the way in the contract catering industry.”