

Evolva and Cargill to co-develop steviol glycosides

Swiss company Evolva has entered into an agreement with Cargill to jointly develop and commercialise fermentation-derived steviol glycosides. Cargill will be responsible for commercialisation and has agreed to make a CHF 5 million (approximately US\$ 5.3 million) equity investment in Evolva.

Additionally, Evolva stands to receive up to US\$7.5 million in milestone payments and has the right to a 45% participation in the final business. If Evolva decides not to exercise this option it will receive royalty payments from global sales of the co-developed steviol glycoside products; these royalties will scale from mid-single digit to low double-digit percentages as a function of sales volume and other parameters.

Cargill brings to the collaboration its manufacturing and commercial expertise in bulk sweeteners, food ingredients and stevia sweeteners.

Evolva specialises in sustainable, fermentation-based approaches to ingredients for health, wellness and nutrition, such as stevia, vanilla, saffron and resveratrol, as well as high-value ingredients for the OTC personal care and pharmaceuticals markets.

According to Evolva, the only commercially available steviol glycosides available today are derived from stevia plants grown and harvested in an agriculture setting. Evolva believes it is the first company to successfully adapt fermentation technology to produce a range of commercially relevant steviol glycosides, using sustainable, low-cost, carbohydrate feedstocks, which can be sourced virtually anywhere on the planet.

The company says that fermentation-derived steviol glycosides will benefit food and beverage manufacturers in a number of ways. First, it will allow better tasting steviol-glycoside-based products (the best-tasting stevia leaf molecules are not currently commercially available due to their very low concentrations in the plant). Second, it will allow steviol glycosides to become a more economic product for companies and consumers alike. Finally, it will allow steviol glycosides to be produced using a simplified and scalable supply chain.

Evolva and Cargill said that they believe that fermentation-derived steviol glycosides have the potential to unlock more value from stevia.

"We are very excited about and fully committed to supporting fermentation-based steviol glycoside technology to provide our customers with a wider array of great-tasting options," said Cargill VP and global business director for health ingredients David Henstrom. "What's more, Evolva has proven capabilities to enable this breakthrough in a sustainable way."

"Cargill is the perfect partner for Evolva to advance the development, scale-up, and commercialisation of fermentation-derived steviol glycosides, not least because they are a global industry leader in the stevia business and a powerhouse in food ingredient production," said Evolva CEO Neil Goldsmith. "They are fundamentally changing the sweetener category around the world with their stevia-based sweetener products. We view this collaboration as further evidence that industry has recognized that Evolva's technology platform represents a uniquely powerful foundation for producing sustainable, next-generation, high-value health, nutrition, and wellness products."