

# Florida Crystals touts sugar without carbon footprint

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WEST PALM BEACH — Going green just got a lot sweeter.

Florida Crystals Corp. said Tuesday it will introduce in two to four weeks its Carbonfree brand organic and natural sugar products, a label that indicates the product's carbon footprint was rendered neutral through methods that cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The natural and organic lines join Royal Hawaiian Honey as the only food products in the United States to be certified as "carbon-free" by [Carbonfund.org](#), said Russell Simon, spokesman for the Silver Spring, Md.-based nonprofit.

"This is the next big thing," said Simon, who said [Carbonfund.org](#) is working with a number of companies that are going through "life cycle analysis" of their products.

Luis Fernandez, chief financial officer for West Palm Beach-based Florida Crystals and chairman of subsidiary Domino Foods Inc., said the company, which began producing organic sugar 10 years ago, wants its products to be as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible. Florida Crystals' natural sugar line has been produced since 1993.

"Our guess is that this issue is becoming more and more important for all U.S. food companies," Fernandez said Tuesday. "For grocery chains that are interested in sustainability, this will catch their attention."

Typically, companies buy carbon credits to offset carbon footprints. In Florida Crystals' case, the company doesn't have to. Its own western Palm Beach County renewable energy plant, which has produced electricity from sugar cane waste and wood waste for a decade, offsets the carbon produced.

Florida Department of Agriculture spokesman Terry McElroy said the department applauds Florida Crystals' renewable energy production, and added that ideas like this are what the state's farm-to-fuel initiative is all about.

"The company is using its renewable energy to offset carbon output. That's a positive thing," McElroy said.

The certification process took a year and was earned through an assessment performed by Europe's premier carbon-management consultants, the Edinburgh Center for Carbon Management. The entire process needed to produce sugar - including planting, growing,

harvesting, milling, packaging and delivery - was examined.

Gary Black, Florida Crystals' marketing director, said the move is expected to increase the brand's profile nationwide and win it more retailers. The trend is already under way in the European Union.

"It is just starting to catch fire in the U.S.," Black said.

Juan Rodriguez, director of education and outreach for Gainesville-based Florida Organic Growers, said that more and more consumers are concerned about the way their food is produced and want to consume more sustainable products.

"I think there will be more and more green products. I think labeling and third-party verification will become more common," Rodriguez said.

Atlanta-based Monarch Beverages, which produces All-Sport drinks, will be introducing a carbon-free energy drink within the next few weeks, said Carbonfund's Simon. Such labeling helps a company communicate its good works directly, he said.

"You don't have to rely on a marketing campaign," Simon said.