



Pfeifer & Langen



Beet sugar or cane sugar

Fact Sheet

Which one sets the standard on sustainability?

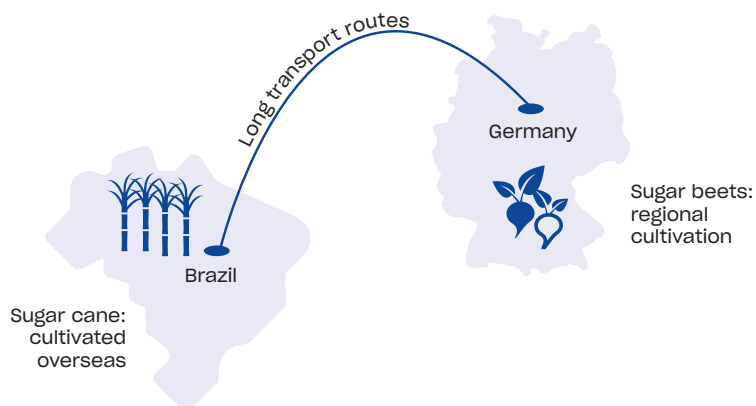
Where do beet sugar and cane sugar come from?

Beet sugar comes from sugar beets and is primarily cultivated regionally in countries such as Germany and Poland.⁴

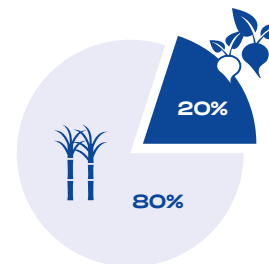


Cane sugar, however, is obtained from sugar cane, which is mainly grown in the tropics (e.g. Brazil).

Growing sugar cane contributes to deforestation and thus to the destruction of rainforest. In addition, because cane sugar comes from overseas, it has to travel long distances to reach Europe.^{5,6}



What is the global share of beet sugar compared to cane sugar?¹



What are the advantages of crop rotation compared to monoculture farming?



Sugar cane is cultivated as a perennial monoculture, whereas sugar beets are cultivated as an annual crop with crop rotation. This crop rotation gives sugar beet cultivation many advantages over sugar cane:^{2,3}

- ✓ better soil structure
- ✓ more fertile soil
- ✓ fewer weeds
- ✓ fewer diseases and pests



Nutritionally, physiologically and chemically, there is no difference between beet sugar and cane sugar, as both are sucrose.

Beet sugar and cane sugar are both available in white and brown types. In this respect, the main differences are in taste. However, there is no difference in their effect on the body, nor in terms of the vitamin and mineral content taken in.



The botanical origin is now also shown on our packaging.



How much water is needed for cultivation and production?



Sugar beets need 550-750 l/m² per year for cultivation, whereas sugar cane requires 1,500-2,500 l/m². In beet-growing areas, rainfall by itself is usually sufficient, as the deep root system enables good use of the available water and regeneration during dry spells.^{8,9}

This water footprint illustrates the difference in water requirements: On average, 920 litres of water are needed to produce one kilogram of beet sugar, compared to 1,782 litres for 1 kilogram of cane sugar.¹⁰



How high are the sugar content and the annual yield increase?



Sugar beets, with a sugar content of 17-19 percent, contain a higher proportion than sugar cane, which has 12-16 percent.^{11,12} The relative yield increase potential of sugar beet is higher. In the EU, the average sugar yield from sugar beets is today about 64 percent higher than it was some 20 years ago.¹³

Conclusion: beet sugar vs. cane sugar⁷

Compared to cane sugar, beet sugar has many sustainability advantages:

- ✓ regional product with short transportation routes
- ✓ cultivation does not involve deforestation
- ✓ promotes biodiversity, as sugar beet is grown using crop rotation
- ✓ requires less water in farming and production



Sources: ¹ F.O.Licht, 15.05.2023 ² <https://www.pflanzenforschung.de/de/pflanzenwissen/lexikon-a-z/monokultur-786>. ³ CIBE & CEFS: The EU Beet and Sugar Sector: A Model of Environmental Sustainability, 2009. ⁴ <https://www.zuckerverbaende.de/zahlen-fakten/europaeische-union/>, 08.07.2025. ⁵ Obidzinski et al: Taking the Bitter with the Sweet: Sugarcane's Return as a Driver of Tropical Deforestation, 2015, Cifor ⁶ Jusys: A confirmation of the indirect impact of sugarcane on deforestation in the Amazon, 2017; <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/>, 21.12.2020. ⁷ Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Agrarpolitik, Ernährung und gesundheitlichen Verbraucherschutz: Gutachten Politik für eine nachhaltigere Ernährung, 2020. ⁸ <http://www.fao.org/land-water/databases-and-software/crop-information/sugarbeet/en/>, 15.12.2020. ⁹ <http://www.fao.org/land-water/databases-and-software/crop-information/sugarcane/en/>, 15.12.2020. ¹⁰ <https://waterfootprint.org/en/resources/interactive-tools/product-gallery>, 03.09.2020. ¹¹ WVZ: Jahresberichte 2010-2023. ¹² Eswatini Sugar Association: Cane production statistics, 2020; DATAGRO, 2023. ¹³ Miracle Yield - Profitability: Made by Breeding - Sugarbeet - KWS UK Ltd.



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