

5 Facts About the New Mars Candy Factory

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TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Mars Inc. is confident in Americans' sweet tooth. [The candy giant has built a \\$270 million plant](#) [1] — its first in North America in 35 years — in Kansas that will churn out millions of chocolate bars and other sweets each day.

Here are five things to know about the project:

SELLING SWEETS: Mars Inc. is bullish about the future of chocolate sales in the U.S. and believes it needs the additional capacity to meet Americans' demand for its M&M's and Snickers-brand candy. An industry analyst said candy companies can expect the annual growth in chocolate sales to stay above 3 percent into the future, a pretty healthy rate for the snack-foods market.

CHOCOLATE RIVER: The new plant will be able to produce 14 million bite-sized Snickers bars each day, along with 39 million M&M's, which is enough to fill 1.5 million fun-sized packages. The 500,000-square-foot facility was built south of Topeka and is the company's first new plant in North America in more than three decades.

SWEET DEAL: Topeka-area officials see the plant as a major boon to the region. The plant will have more than 200 employees, and the company has contributed \$200,000 to downtown redevelopment efforts. The plant also is pursuing a "gold" certification for environmental sustainability from the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council.

PLANET MARS: The family-owned Mars Inc. reports annual net sales of \$33 billion and more than 72,000 employees in 74 countries. Its chocolate unit, Mars Chocolate, produces 29 brands that include M&M's and Snickers, which the company says are billion-dollar brands. Another division, Wrigley, produces gum, hard candies and chewy candies. Mars also has non-candy food products, produces pet foods and runs pet hospitals.

LOCAL FANS: Topeka Mayor Larry Wolgast keeps a dispenser of peanut M&M's on his desk at City Hall. Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback said he favors almond M&M's, and he sees it as fitting that many Americans will get the sweet snacks from the Heartland.

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