

LANXESS receives the German Innovation Award for Climate and the Environment

- **A modular plant for the extraction of retanning agents from leather residues was chosen for the award in the category “Environmentally-friendly products”**
- **The award was presented by State Secretary at Ministry for Environment Jochen Flasbarth and Holger Lösch, Deputy Director General of the Federation of German Industries (BDI)**
- **Joint project with the INVITE research institute and the HELLER-LEDER tannery**
- **Pilot-plant for resource-efficient production already in operation at the tannery**

Cologne – LANXESS, the specialty chemicals company, has been honored with the 2017 German Innovation Award for Climate and the Environment. State Secretary at Ministry for Environment Jochen Flasbarth and Holger Lösch, Deputy Director General of the Federation of German Industries (BDI), presented the award to Luis López-Remón, head of the LANXESS business unit Leather in the course of a formal event in Berlin.

LANXESS received the award in the category “Environmentally-friendly products and services” for an innovative technology developed for the recycling of residues from the leather manufacturing process. Under the title “Resource-efficient production of leather chemicals” (ReeL), the specialty chemicals company collaborated with the research institute INVITE from Leverkusen on the realization of a concept for a modular plant for the production of a retanning agent with the brand name “X-Biomer” from leather offcuts, trimmings and shavings, up until now generally a waste product for disposal, and plant-based biomass. The innovative plant can be operated on-site in tanneries. “

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The award clearly confirms that we are on the right, as sustainable, path with our resource-efficient production of leather chemicals. With this innovation project, we want to show that production residues from the leather manufacturing process can be recycled on-site in tanneries and that we can significantly improve the sustainability profile of the leather manufacturing industry,” said López-Remón at the official award ceremony. Because, it is much more efficient in comparison with the traditional production of retanning agents in production facilities far away from the tanneries.

Tannery would be able to produce their own retanning agents

In this way, a tannery would be able to automatically and largely independently produce a part of its own needs for retanning agents like those offered by LANXESS in its X-Biomer range. “This project is a very promising step towards an even more sustainable production concept,” explained Dietrich Tegtmeyer, head of the project at LANXESS. “While on the one hand, ‘on-site’ and ‘just in time’ production brings enormous savings of resources in terms of energy, logistics, and packaging, on the other hand, by-products like shavings containing collagen can be utilized as a raw material for the production of the retanning chemicals required.”

The three-year joint project with the partners INVITE GmbH and HELLER-LEDER GmbH & Co. KG has an investment volume totaling five million euros. The modular production plant constructed by INVITE is currently being tested under realistic production conditions at the HELLER-LEDER tannery.

The innovation project receives funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as a part of the “r+Impuls – innovative technologies for resource efficiency – impulses for industrial resource efficiency” initiative. This funding initiative provides support for projects that take innovative technologies and products out of the laboratory and make them commercially viable.

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Complete recycling without emissions

A medium sized tannery produces between one and two metric tons of shavings per day. With a production plant leased from LANXESS, the tannery would be able to produce a comparable volume of liquid X-Biomer for retanning. The process recycles shavings completely, without any residues or emissions. “The aim of the project is to enable us to offer tanners the X-Biomer product with a concept that is not only ecological, but also economically sustainable,” said Tegtmeier. Higher production costs as a result of the concept should, for example, be offset by the reduction of logistics- and energy costs. “The aim now is to verify the concept model in a pilot phase. In any case, besides this, the project will serve the improvement of sustainability.”

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the industry

In the meantime, sustainability is also essential in the leather industry. Within its “Sustainable Leather Management” initiative, LANXESS therefore offers its customers in the leather industry innovative technologies to assist them in the realization of sustainable, ecologically compatible products and processes – without making compromises in quality.

The company’s products bring measurable benefits in terms of reduced emissions or a reduced carbon footprint, which ultimately makes a positive contribution to the prevention of global warming. Besides increased efficiency in production, finishing, and recycling, this achieves a more responsible handling of the raw material and waste products.

The Leather business unit

The Leather business unit is part of the Performance Chemicals segment at LANXESS, which achieved a turnover of EUR 2.1 billion in 2016. The business unit is active worldwide and maintains a

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presence in six countries. It employs a global workforce of around 1,500 employees, more than 150 of whom are in Germany.

LANXESS is a leading specialty chemicals company with sales of EUR 7.7 billion in 2016 and about 19,200 employees in 25 countries. The company is currently represented at 74 production sites worldwide. The core business of LANXESS is the development, manufacturing and marketing of chemical intermediates, additives, specialty chemicals and plastics. Through ARLANXEO, the joint venture with Saudi Aramco, LANXESS is also a leading supplier of synthetic rubber. LANXESS is listed in the leading sustainability indices Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI World and Europe) and FTSE4Good.

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Forward-Looking Statements

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You can find further information concerning LANXESS chemistry in our WebMagazine at <http://webmagazine.lanxess.com>.

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Image



Luis López-Rémon (1st from right) and Dietrich Tegtmeier (4th from right) of LANXESS's Leather business unit, together with the project partners of HELLER-LEDER and INVITE, accepted the German Innovation Award for Climate and the Environment for their project "Resource-efficient production of leather chemicals" (ReeL).
Photo: Kruppa/IKU

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