Press release

Evonik aims to generate additional sales of at least €350 million by 2030 with solutions for circular plastics

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- Company pools its circular plastics activities in push towards more sustainable solutions
- Extensive solutions for recycling technologies keep raw materials in loop
- Evonik cooperates closely with partners along the value chain

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Essen, Germany. Evonik is pooling its activities for circular plastics in a global program. As part of the transition to a circular economy, the company offers its customers solutions for all stages in the polymer value chain. Additives and technologies from Evonik make mechanical and chemical recycling more efficient thus improving the availability of circular plastics. Evonik will also increase the use of sustainable raw materials from circular sources in its own production processes. Overall, the company expects its global circular plastics program to generate additional sales of more than €350 million a year by 2030.

“The careful use of resources and protection of the climate leads us down the path towards a circular economy,” said Harald Schwager, deputy chairman of Evonik's executive board, who is responsible for innovation. “We have the innovative capability to create new materials cycles with fewer fossil-based feedstocks and more circular ones. We intend to utilize that potential.”

More than 350 million metric tons of plastics are produced worldwide every year. However, only a small fraction of that amount is recycled. Evonik can facilitate the transformation to a circular economy for sustainable plastics applications with its additives and solutions, and that at competitive cost and quality.

“We are working closely with partners along the entire polymer value chain to make this happen,” said Lauren Kjeldsen, who is responsible for Evonik's global circular plastics program. “Innovations are the key to success.”

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In mechanical recycling, plastics are sorted, prepared and washed, before being melted and granulated into a recyclate. This procedure is used mainly for thermoplastics and in a similar process for old tires. Evonik experts are working to help recyclers significantly improve the efficiency and quality of the processes. For example, customized surfactants are used to make sure labels can be removed quickly without leaving residues, while defoamers simplify washing processes and dewatering agents save energy and time in subsequent drying. Another focus is minimizing the odor of the recyclate. Specialty additives from Evonik can increase the amount of high-quality re-usable recyclate obtained by about 5 percent. Evonik aims to offer such solutions for about 400,000 metric tons of recyclable plastics by 2025.

Evonik is also working on various chemical recycling technologies for plastic waste that cannot be recycled mechanically. Here, the polymer chains are split to obtain building blocks for the production of new plastics. For example, Evonik is currently developing a process to facilitate recycling of heavily contaminated polyethylene terephthalate (PET) waste. New molecules for high-end applications can be obtained via methanolysis.

Another method of chemical recycling is controlled incineration of plastic waste to produce pyrolysis oils or synthesis gases. Evonik offers modern technologies that play a part in making these processes more efficient. Examples are additives, catalysts, and membranes for the treatment of gas. These pyrolysis oils and synthesis gases can be used as raw materials for the production of plastics.

All of these processes have one thing in common: The goal is to replace fossil-based resources such as oil wherever possible, avoid waste, and minimize carbon dioxide emissions.

Company information

Evonik is one of the world leaders in specialty chemicals. The company is active in more than 100 countries around the world and generated sales of €12.2 billion and an operating profit (adjusted EBITDA) of €1.91 billion in 2020. Evonik goes far beyond chemistry to create innovative, profitable and sustainable solutions for customers. More than 33,000 employees work together for a common purpose: We want to improve life today and tomorrow.

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