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Gesellschaft für Chemische Technik
und Biotechnologie e.V.

ACHEMA in the focus of bio-economy – bio-economy in the focus of ACHEMA

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Check against delivery!

When talking about the up-coming ACHEMA, we name two focus topics that are currently especially important to our industries. One is energy with all its aspects – from energy generation and storage for stationary and mobile applications to the efficient use in processing plants. The second focus topic is the “BiobasedWorld at ACHEMA”. This includes the diverse concepts for the use of renewable resources – biomass processing, the development of bio-based products, the combined use of biomass as a raw material and for energy generation. Biotechnological methods are an integral part of these concepts and even today one cannot imagine the pharmaceutical, chemical and food industry without them.

But on closer examination, there is one basic question: How can we ensure the future supply with energy, mobility, food and feed and the numerous products of every-day life based on renewable resources?

The concept of bio-based economy aims to answer this question with one comprehensive approach. This makes the idea at the same time promising and challenging. Can bioeconomy actually offer a sustainable and lasting answer to the question how all these needs can be met at once? In the area of energy supply, it has already become obvious that the contribution of biomass should not be overrated. Thus, the implementation of the bioeconomy has to be based on a differentiated and comprehensive examination of mass and energy flows, alternative uses and interdependencies. In any case, it requires the interaction of industries and stakeholders that have so far not had many points of contact.

This is expressed by the economic dimensions: According to the current Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU, the annual sales of the bioeconomy in Europe amount to 2 trillion Euros and the number of employees is 22 million – that represents almost every tenth employee in the EU. This numbers are based on a broad conception of bioeconomy: It includes agri- and silviculture, food and wood processing industries including pulp mills or producers of bio-based insulating materials, fibres or plastics. The processing industry will gain in importance, especially when new value chains are established, where it has exactly this function: Biomass, an often complex mixture of substances, is processed to basic chemicals and raw materials for subsequent treatment.

The intelligent combination of chemical and biotechnological processes is crucial. Biotechnology is indispensable in biomass processing. But chemistry has to contribute as well.



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Thus, chemistry and biotechnology are gradually merging, and even today it is difficult to define a dedicated “biotechnology industry” as biotechnology is not only employed by many biotech start-ups but also in the plants of big industry. DECHEMA is intensively working on bringing the different stakeholders together. As coordinators of the lignocelluloses biorefinery project in Leuna and through my role as the chairman of the working group for a biorefinery roadmap we are actively involved in the development of this future centerpiece of the bioeconomy.

Thus, bioeconomy logically plays an important role at AICHEMA, indeed throughout almost all exhibition groups and a significant proportion of the congress. It cannot be narrowed down to one hall or one congress session, but runs like a red thread through large parts of the programme. This is why “BiobasedWorld” has no defined geographic borders on the fair ground, but is a virtual platform within a very real AICHEMA.

To list everything that happens within the BiobasedWorld would blow the schedule of this press conference. Still I would like to mention some numbers and highlights of the programme:

About 700 exhibitors are directly associated with the BiobasedWorld and active in biotechnology, life sciences or biomass processing. Add the providers of components especially designed for biomass processing, producers of analytics and measurement and control technology for bioprocesses and the many companies working on process development and integration.

The conference „European Innovation Partnership Bioeconomy“ represents the complete value chain of the bioeconomy on a European level, including research funding, the availability of resources and the development of bio-based products as well as the successful implementation of research results. In close proximity, the Accelerator Forum organized by the European BIOCHEM project offers support to small and medium-sized enterprises who want to enter the market with bio-based products.

On the first day of the congress, bioeconomy is the topic of a public panel discussion. The “Bioeconomy showcase” organized by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Agency for Renewable Resources FNR in the Galleria will illustrate that the bioeconomy is not just an idea, but a tangible reality.

I mentioned in the beginning that the successful implementation of bioeconomy requires the cooperation of new stakeholders. The examples show how AICHEMA contributes to this. This does not go unnoticed: AICHEMA’s reputation goes beyond the scientific and technical community. This is not least indicated by the fact that the Federal Ministries of Education and Research and of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection will present the above-mentioned biorefinery roadmap at AICHEMA. This signals to us and to our community that the key role of the process industries is appreciated in the political sphere and that AICHEMA is acknowledged as their global forum.