

Pioneers in isophorone chemistry

- Isophorone chemistry launched in Herne 50 years ago
- Growing demand from the Asia-Pacific region is the driving force behind the production startup for new isophorone plants in Shanghai
- More than 80 percent of products based on isophorone chemistry used in the coatings industry go into eco-friendly systems

On November 16, Evonik celebrated 50 years of making isophorone chemicals. This was an important milestone for the company, and some 200 customers, employees, and pensioned former employees joined Evonik Executive Board members Dr. Thomas Haeberle and Thomas Wessel in Herne to look back on the long and interesting history of isophorone chemistry at the site.

The first plant for isophorone production commenced operation at the Herne site of Hibernia, as a predecessor company of Evonik Industries in 1962. Discovered as a byproduct of acetone catalysis, isophorone, a solvent, evolved to eventually become one of the company's core areas of competency. The continual further development of this product, combined with the exploration and tapping of new technologies and markets, enabled the company to build an extensive product portfolio for applications in a whole variety of industries.

"We are celebrating not just a strong and versatile product portfolio, but the development of tailored solutions for our customers, as well," said Dr. Thomas Haeberle, Evonik Industries Executive Board member, of the anniversary celebration. "Over the years we've established close, trusting partnerships in this field, and they've inspired, and continue to inspire, us to systematically expand our portfolio of products and services." Chief Human Resources Officer of Evonik, Thomas Wessel emphasizes: "Good skilled and safety-conscious employees are the foundation for the success of our plants in Herne".

"We'll see a continued strong rise in the demand for developments that enable the conservation of natural resources," explains Dr. Ulrich Küsthardt, head of the Coatings & Additives Business Unit, by way of emphasizing the importance of and the growth potential for isophorone

December 7, 2012

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for the Evonik Group. “That’s one of the reasons why we’re appreciated as a highly competent partner for isophorone-based products in the market for composites.”

Just recently, in June of this year, Evonik held a groundbreaking ceremony for the start of construction of a plant in Shanghai (China), its fifth isophorone production site. Products from the new facilities, which are scheduled to come on stream in the first quarter of 2014, will primarily serve markets in China and Asia Pacific, with an annual capacity of 50kt.

Isophorone, isophorone diamine, isophorone diisocyanate, and their derivatives are important components in the production, for example, of industrial flooring, vinyl, and paints and coatings, for the growth field of high-performance composites, and in chemical synthesis. Already, more than 80 percent of the isophorone sold to the coatings industry is employed in eco-friendly systems.

Evonik currently manufactures isophorone chemical products in Herne and Marl (Germany), Mobile, Alabama (USA), and Antwerp (Belgium). The company markets these products around the globe under the trademarks of VESTAMIN®, VESTANAT®, VESTAGON® and VESTASOL®.

About Evonik

Evonik, the creative industrial group from Germany, is one of the world leaders in specialty chemicals. Its activities focus on the key megatrends health, nutrition, resource efficiency and globalization. Profitable growth and a sustained increase in the value of the company form the heart of Evonik’s corporate strategy. Evonik benefits specifically from its innovative prowess and integrated technology platforms. Evonik is active in over 100 countries around the world. In fiscal 2011 more than 33,000 employees generated sales of around €14.5 billion and an operating profit (EBITDA) of about €2.8 billion.

Evonik Industries has been producing specialty chemical products in the Greater China region (Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) since the late 1970’s; with wide-ranging trading relations already in place prior to this in the region. Evonik regards Greater China as one of the driving forces of the global economy and we consequently endeavour to grow our business in the region. The company now has around 3,500 employees in the Greater China region, the regional sales reached over 1.2 billion in 2011.

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