

Munich, September 4, 2019

Press Release

IFAT 2020: Digitalization as a driver of circular economy

- Secondary raw materials with a precisely fitting design
- Support for start-ups with a focus on digitalization
- Market challenges: investment needs, new competitors, interface problems

Bianca Gruber
PR Manager
Tel. +49 89 949-21502
bianca.gruber@
messe-muenchen.de

“Digitalization will significantly change today's circular economy,” Naemi Denz is certain. According to the Managing Director of the Waste Treatment and Recycling Association in the German Engineering Federation (VDMA), digitally transmitted information, for example, will ensure that secondary raw materials can be designed with even greater precision. “In the future, the composition of the input material will be analyzed in real time and the treatment process will be controlled by the output. For mechanical and plant engineering this means that the trend moves away from pure mechanical treatment. Measuring and analysis devices will be used more commonly, as are automation components”, predicts the expert.

Using digital watermarks for sorting packaging

One current example of this new approach is the Holy Grail project of the association Petcore Europe: over the past three years, 29 well-known companies from the consumer goods and recycling industries have made efforts to use digital watermarks to create a better basis for sorting plastic packaging. These watermarks—i.e. codes invisible to the human eye—were printed on labels, sleeves, films, bags and bottles. Specific scanners can then read them and thus give information on the packagings' material and whether they contained food, cosmetics or detergents. According to Petcore Europe, existing sorting systems can be easily upgraded with such a scanner. The next step currently planned is to test the new technology on a production line and on an industrial scale.

Intelligent injection molding machines and robotic disassembly

Digitalization also can enable further process innovations: for example, digitally supported injection molding machines that react to material fluctuations and thus process recycled plastics better than before. Robotic systems equipped with artificial intelligence would be able to accelerate and improve dismantling or

Messe München GmbH
Messegelände
81823 München
Germany
messe-muenchen.de

Press Release | September 4, 2019 | 2/2

waste separation. And given the current high transaction costs, new digital market and logistics platforms could help to match supply and demand even more easily.

Promotion—while monitoring risks

The German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU) attaches great importance to digitalization when it comes to implementing the major political and social environmental goals—which include an efficient circular economy. Hence, this year, the foundation initiated a special program worth one and a half million euros to promote green start-ups focusing on digitalization. According to DBU Secretary General Alexander Bonde the risks of digital solutions will also be kept in mind: “We want to shape digitalization in such a way that it helps us to protect the environment, nature and climate—and does not lead to more consumption of scarce raw materials and environmental pollution.”

Investment and the development of common interfaces

Industry newcomers and their digital ideas are therefore welcome. And what does Circular Economy 4.0 mean for the established disposal and recycling companies? “First and foremost, investments at all levels. After all, the companies must push ahead with their digitalization even faster and more emphatically than before and deal with new competitors on the market,” Naemi Denz explains.

Peter Kurth, President of the Federal Association of the German Waste, Water and Raw Materials Management Industry (BDE): “Smooth digital processes allow companies in the waste management industry to cooperate even more efficiently. It is important, however, that companies speak a common language in digital processes in the future.” According to the BDE there is a demand for consistent standards in the companies’ digital communication with their customers and, above all, for coordinated interfaces. In this context, the association is currently working on defining harmonized data fields for the exchange of order-related performance data (AvaL) while considering the currently available communication paths. “Our AvaL project is especially essential for medium-sized businesses. We invite all companies in the industry to jointly advance this interface,” Peter Kurth emphasizes.

IFAT 2020 delivers the state of the art

IFAT 2020 is worth a visit as it will provide a comprehensive overview of the market’s state of the art. The World’s Leading Trade Fair for Water, Sewage, Waste and Raw Materials Management—held from May 4 to 8, 2020 at the exhibition center in Munich—will not only showcase the latest, also digital solutions for the circular economy and resource efficiency. As usual, the show’s extensive lecture and discussion program will also offer the opportunity to learn

Press Release | September 4, 2019 | 3/3

more about the trends, opportunities and risks of the market driver digitalization from many angles.

More information on IFAT is available at ifat.de.

Images for the press release:



Naemi Denz, Managing Director of the Waste Treatment and Recycling Association in the German Engineering Federation (VDMA): “Digitalization will significantly change today’s circular economy.”



Digital watermarks could facilitate the sorting of plastic packaging in the future. Scanners in the sorting systems can read the codes, which are invisible to the human eye, and give information about the packaging material and its recyclability.

About IFAT

IFAT is the world’s largest and leading environmental technology trade fair. Every two years, the world-leading trade show presents solutions for water, sewage, waste and raw materials management as well as solutions to make maximum use of resources and to close raw material cycles. The 2018 edition attracted 3,305 exhibitors from 58 countries and 142,472 trade visitors from 162 nations. The event occupied a completely booked space of 260,000 square meters, divided among 18 halls and an outdoor area. The next IFAT will be held at the exhibition center in Munich from May 4 to 8, 2020.

IFAT worldwide

Messe München not only demonstrates its considerable expertise in organizing environmental technology trade shows with the world’s leading trade fair IFAT. Other international events include IE expo China in Shanghai, IE expo Chengdu in Chengdu, IE expo Guangzhou in Guangzhou, IFAT Africa in Johannesburg, IFAT Eurasia in Istanbul, IFAT India in Mumbai as well as IFAT Delhi in New Delhi. Together, the eight IFAT events form the world’s leading network for environmental technologies.

Messe München

Messe München is one of the leading exhibition organizers worldwide with more than 50 of its own trade shows for capital goods, consumer goods and new technologies. Every year, a total of over

Press Release | September 4, 2019 | 4/4

50,000 exhibitors and around three million visitors take part in more than 200 events at the exhibition center in Munich, at the ICM – Internationales Congress Center München and the MOC Veranstaltungszentrum München as well as abroad. Together with its subsidiary companies, Messe München organizes trade shows in China, India, Brazil, Russia, Turkey, South Africa, Nigeria, Vietnam and Iran. With a network of associated companies in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America as well as around 70 representations abroad for over 100 countries, Messe München has a global presence.