PRESS RELEASE

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Bioplastics at the Junction of Engineering and Science

The first company workshop on behalf of the interdisciplinary Research Platform BiNa was held November 11, 2015, at the Technical University in Braunschweig.

Hannover, November 25, 2015. Thirty representatives from companies and associations followed the invitation to attend the workshop and in a constructive and informal atmosphere meet the researchers engaged in BiNa to discuss the challenges to be met for a sustainability assessment of bioplastics, which is of vital interest to the BiNa platform „New Pathways, Strategies, Business and Communication Models for Bioplastics as a Building Block toward a Sustainable Economy".

This workshop is the first in a series of steps to establish the BiNa research platform as an interface between science and engineering. As BiNa develops, a total of six events shall be scheduled to take place so that different actors in bioplastics can be involved.

The meeting began with a welcome address by its host, Prof. Christoph Herrmann of the Institute of Machine Tools and Production Technology (IWF) at the Technical University Braunschweig, and by the BiNa coordinator, Prof. Hans-Josef Endres of the Institute for Bioplastics and Biocomposites (IfBB) at the Hochschule Hannover, University of Applied Sciences and Arts. The main focus of the workshop was to identify impending challenges from an engineering point of view and in small discussion groups develop approaches for possible solutions. Due to the fact that companies from along the entire value chain were represented, a multi-faceted discussion with various perspectives evolved among the participants. It became clear that there is a great need not only to clarify the idea of ***effective sustainability*** but also to address basic uncertainties as to the uses of bioplastics. Besides a general ***information deficit***, these shortcomings are explained primarily by failed communication to the end user and users' particular attitudes toward these materials.

Especially the attempts to develop strategies for dealing with ***existing challenges*** again and again revealed the ***complexity*** of the subject matter and, consequently, the necessity to act in the overall context of the entire value chain. This is obvious when looking at factors such

as biomass cultivation and land use, technical capability and adequate usage, or possible options for disposal. Looking outside the box to ***take a broader view*** as well as the synthesis of interests and needs among diverse stakeholders became a central theme in the discussions. ***Honest handling*** of open questions related to bioplastics as well as a clear and straightforward communication of the issues on the part of science and research was acknowledged by all participants to be a basic requirement for establishing a credible sustainability assessment.

The findings obtained will be taken into account as research on the topic is going on and shall be subject to further discussion with science representatives at a meeting scheduled to take place in the third quarter of 2016. A second company workshop is set to be scheduled in the first quarter of 2017, with its focus put on „communication and bioplastics“.

More information on the BiNa research platform is available at
www.biokunststoffe-nachhaltig.de

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