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Evonik invests heavily in biotech

- Biotechnology—an important growth driver for Evonik Group
- Patrik Wohlhauser, member of the Executive Board: “In the Health & Nutrition Business Unit alone we hope to see sales of €1 billion by 2020 from products made using biotechnology.”
- Thirty years of biotech research in Halle–Künsebeck, Germany

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As one of the world’s leading manufacturers of specialty chemicals, Evonik Industries plans to continue expanding its commitment to biotechnology. “Biotech opens up interesting opportunities for profitable growth in a range of business areas,” says Patrik Wohlhauser, a member of the Executive Board. “It’s also giving Evonik’s growth strategy a stronger focus on sustainable development. In the Health & Nutrition Business Unit alone we are hoping for sales of €1 billion over the medium term for products made using biotechnology.” Evonik will be investing some €350 million by 2014 to expand its Biolys® business. An amino acid used in animal feeds, Biolys® is a source of L-lysine produced via fermentation. Investments include construction of new L-lysine plants in Brazil and Russia capable of producing nearly 200,000 metric tons each year as well as a recently finished production expansion to 280,000 metric tons per year at its Blair site in North America.

The nexus of biotech research at Evonik is the company’s Halle–Künsebeck site in eastern North Rhine–Westphalia, Germany. Now celebrating its 30th anniversary, the site is home to experts who are continuing to develop amino acids for modern animal nutrition, as well as biotech methods for other Evonik business units. Applications for these methods include polymer production and the manufacture of active ingredients in cosmetics. Dr. Peter Nagler, Chief Innovation Officer at Evonik, says: “Besides serving as an important part of the biotech platform of the entire company, Halle–Künsebeck is also closely linked to our strategic research in Marl, Germany. In Halle–Künsebeck we concentrate our expertise in designing industrial–scale fermentation processes.”

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A small research group called “Biotechnology” was established in Halle-Künsebeck in 1982 with the aim of producing L-lysine via fermentation. Today, biotech activities at this Evonik site (part of the Health & Nutrition Business Unit) include, among others, developing and optimizing biotech production methods for the following amino acids used in animal nutrition: Biolys® (a source of L-lysine), ThreAMINO® (L-threonine) and TrypAMINO® (L-tryptophan).

The local employees also benefit from Evonik’s intensified efforts in the field of biotechnology. According to Dr. Ralf Kelle, who heads up the Research & Development Bioproducts team within the Health & Nutrition Business Unit, “Our biotech team at the Halle-Künsebeck site has nearly doubled over the past two years to roughly 100 employees.”

Company information

Evonik, the creative industrial group from Germany, is one of the world leaders in specialty chemicals. Profitable growth and a sustained increase in the value of the company form the heart of Evonik’s corporate strategy. Its activities focus on the key megatrends health, nutrition, resource efficiency and globalization. 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 (adjusted EBITDA) of about €2.8 billion.

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