

“Innovation instead of outsourcing”

C2 had a conversation with Dr Tarik Vardag, Managing Director of the Kroenert group, about new technologies, innovative system concepts and the future of BMB



Dr Tarik Vardag

C2: “Dr Vardag, at your Open House you emphasised that the Kroenert Group has very successfully managed to open up new business segments in the past few months. What does that exactly mean in detail?”

Dr Tarik Vardag: “As a matter of fact, we have been dealing with new and very promising technologies for quite a while. We are speaking about applications in the sectors photovoltaic, OLED, battery coating and prepreg composites. In these areas, we generated as much as a third of our turnover in 2011! Now, our investments in the development of new system concepts of the past few years are paying off.”

C2: “When you introduced your new laboratory coater (LabCo) two years ago, a lot of market observers were convinced that

money will hardly be made with these systems. Obviously, they were all wrong...”

Dr T. Vardag: “That is correct. However, I must admit that we have adjusted and modified our concept: First of all, we designed the LabCo range as a standard system. Today, it is a line which is configured according to the individual customer requirements although it still contains standard elements.”

C2: “In the past, it was often a very important point of coating plant manufacturers to set speed records over and over. This parameter does not seem to be that important with the new applications....”

Dr T. Vardag: “With the classic coating applications, we often still operate

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Lately there are quite some new faces at Kroenert: Volker Siebott is the new head of sales and marketing, Andrea Glawe is now heading the R+D department

speeds of up to 1 600m/min of course. However, with the new operational areas I mentioned, there is certainly a tendency towards distinctly lower speeds. There, our challenge is to achieve a very high precision with a very low application weight. We as the Kroenert Group would like to contribute to get these new applications noticeably more economic and for that we can also make use of the experience we have gained on our 'big' machines. When I said in my last interview with C2 that we are to go from 'fab to lab', I should add now that we also go from 'lab to fab'."

C2: "Especially with the highly-precise new coating plants, coating dies play a very important role. Have you got any plans to start producing them yourself?"

Dr T. Vardag: "No, due to the cooperation with different specialised suppliers, we are very well positioned and, therefore, do not intend to start a production of coating dies ourselves."

C2: "The planned reorganisation of your Swiss subsidiary BMB Bachofen + Meier AG has been much talked of in the converting industry in the last few weeks. What exactly will change?"

Dr T. Vardag: "First of all I would like to point out that BMB will continue to remain an important part of the Kroenert Group. The changes affect above all the relocation of the production and assembly of the winders to Hamburg. Reason for this decision is for one thing the strong Swiss franc, sending up production costs in Switzerland, and, for another thing, we can easily make use of the complete infrastructure needed for the production of winders here with Kroenert in Hamburg."

C2: "Will BMB employees move from Bülach to Hamburg?"

Dr T. Vardag: "Yes, we have made an offer to Swiss employers and some of them have accepted. We intend to reduce our workforce in Bülach from 70 to about 30."

C2: "What will remain in Bülach?"

Dr T. Vardag: "Plant-engineering, sales, service, external installation and machine installations as well as the project management will still be located there."

C2: "Will Kroenert and BMB have their own sales teams in future, too?"

Dr T. Vardag: "We are going to centralise sales. In this regard, Volker Siebott took over the general management of sales and marketing of Kroenert and BMB. The sales manager of Kroenert, Mr Michael Schmalz, will retire in May; however, will continue to support us as a sales director and commissioner in a limited timeframe."

C2: "Will you keep operating under both brand names – Kroenert and BMB?"

Dr T. Vardag: "Yes, but there will be an innovation at BMB: We are about to develop plants for the 'emerging markets' – such as Asia and South America – which can better meet the local requirements. Kroenert will cover the market of customised plants."

C2: "Does that mean the new BMB plants will have a different capacity and price structure?"

Dr T. Vardag: "Yes, but it is very important for us to stress that these more cost-efficient plants for Asia and South America, too, will be produced in Switzerland or in Germany. All core elements will continue to be produced in Europe."

C2: "Are you able to keep up in price with competitors in the machine-building locations of Germany or Switzerland, when they profit from lower labour and production costs outside Europe?"

Dr T. Vardag: "Absolutely. We are prepared to manufacture economically by intelligent system concepts over here, too. Especially in the sector special plants, it would not make sense, in our opinion, to outsource production – for example to Asia. The key to our success is to be innovative. As long as we develop innovations in the overall technology and in individual applications, we can easily operate from Germany and Switzerland." ■

KROENERT OPEN HOUSE



“New technologies for the future” in the focal point

More than 170 trade visitors accepted the invitation of Kroenert GmbH & Co KG to the Open House to Hamburg and experienced a day characterised by future-oriented new technologies from the areas Printed Electronics, organic photovoltaic, Li-batteries and composite materials. The organisers had put together a highly diverse and informative programme which offered a successful mixture of technical presentations and live-demonstrations. The highlights of the Open House were two demonstrations in the renowned Technology Center: At first, a PET foil was run on the laboratory coater LabCo equipped with a stripe coating for organically flexible solar cells. After that, the trade visitors could also observe an intermittent coating for battery applications on the big RECO pilot plant.

Would you like to know more? Please have a look at the column “C2 DOKU” and watch our current documentary about the Open House on www.c2-deutschland.de



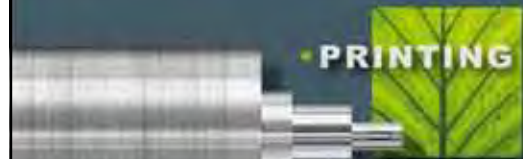
Test runs quickened interest



The stripe coating in detail



Intermittent coating for battery applications on the big RECO pilot plant



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