

Press release

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“A company that serves as an example for the entire industry”

German Environmental Prize 2020: Individual recognition for Annika and Hugo Sebastian Trappmann

Limburg. Energy and resource conservation for climate protection through high-tech digitalisation: These are the distinguishing features of the Blechwarenfabrik Limburg and its Managing Directors, siblings Annika (28) and Hugo Sebastian (37) Trappmann. The German Environmental Foundation (DBU) is honouring their efforts with this year’s German Environmental Award. “The measures they have implemented go far beyond the usual levels of commitment and, as an example of best practices, are leading the way for many other manufacturing industries,” says DBU General Secretary Alexander Bonde. As it stands today, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will present the award in Hannover on 25 October 2020. The award comes with EUR 250,000 in prize money.

A company raises the bar

With a staff of 320, the Blechwarenfabrik Limburg has been one of the leading, sustainability-oriented companies in Germany for more than 10 years, says Bonde. The company has raised the bar in terms of energy and resource efficiency in particular. Their currently ongoing move into a newly constructed facility is not only being used to increase the degree of digitalisation in the company’s manufacturing processes, but also to review and upgrade all of the company’s operating procedures and technologies. For this purpose, the company has developed its own equipment and tools, and also installed intelligent heating and lighting systems. Furthermore, solar power from the building’s roof is used for a number of processes. With the new overall concept, the family-owned company has been able to reduce its annual carbon dioxide emissions by around 2,600 tonnes and save around 100 tonnes of tinplate a year.

Sustainability across generations

The groundwork for this development was already laid by the siblings’ father, shareholder and former Managing Director Dr Hugo Trappmann, as well as the Hempel family of shareholders. The siblings turned these ideas

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into reality. "With our new construction project, we have set ourselves ambitious goals and overcome a number of challenges," says Managing Director Annika Trappmann. The company has established a business intelligence system (BI) that collects and processes all of the company's data so that it can be evaluated in order to further increase efficiency.

Less waste and reduced energy consumption thanks to new concepts

Bonde emphasizes: "The young entrepreneurs have systematically improved the consumption of resources in their company for a number of years. Thanks to equipment that they developed in-house, they have been able to manufacture their metal containers with less waste." Furthermore, they developed a new technology for coating the surfaces of tinplate that has allowed them to stop using one of their two traditional gas ovens, which consumed a great deal of energy. Waste heat from the industrial processes is used for both heating and cooling in all of the company's buildings. Hugo Sebastian Trappmann: "Together with our team, we have put our hearts and souls into developing new equipment. After all, when a person does a certain job or works with a certain machine every day, they are the ones who are best able to determine possible improvements."

Coupling energy production and consumption

According to Trappmann, around one-third of the electricity used by the plant comes directly from the plant's roof. The power generated by the solar modules at all of the company's locations is roughly equivalent to the annual power consumption of 450 households. Furthermore, the company is currently developing a controller that is able to start up particularly energy-intensive processes during times when more energy is produced. A monitoring system makes it possible to see how much power the systems are consuming at any given time so that workers can react immediately to any anomalies. Bonde: "The company has demonstrated that a small- or medium-sized enterprise does not necessarily have to rely on standard solutions, which often lack flexibility and are rarely suitable for the needs of the individual company. Instead, with novel ideas and dedication, SMEs are able to achieve a great deal on their own."

It is economically worthwhile

According to Bonde, the young Managing Directors have proven "that energy and resource efficiency also make sense from an economical point of view. After all, in addition to saving materials and cutting carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂), they are also saving costs." The Trappmanns are consistently, systematically building upon the company's environmentally-conscious foundation. "This makes the Blechwarenfabrik Limburg an exceptionally resource-efficient industrial company and an example for the entire manufacturing industry", says Bonde.

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