

December 11, 2020

Sulzer partners with H&M and Worn Again in developing technology for textile recycling – Sulzer Chemtech’s Division President elected Chairman of Worn Again

More and more fabrics end up in landfills, making textile waste one of society’s pressing environmental issues. Because of the complexity of garments’ production, chemical recycling techniques have only been applied to a minor share of end-of-use textiles and clothing so far. As the technology partner for UK-based Worn Again Technologies, a company majority-owned by Sulzer and H&M, Sulzer brings in its expertise with a new technology to recycle textiles, thus enabling circularity. The teams will now engineer a demonstration plant and further scale-up this novel closed-loop recycling process with a planned output of 1’000 tons per year.

Sulzer and H&M are strategic partners of Worn Again Technologies, an early stage technology company based in the UK. Building on its long-standing expertise in separation, mixing and polymerization technologies, Sulzer will provide equipment and technology at the heart of Worn Again’s unique closed-loop textile recycling process, converting textiles at their end of use back into virgin-like raw materials. With this, the company enables circularity for millions of tons of garments usually ending up in landfills or incinerators. Today, more than 60 million tons of natural and synthetic textile fibers for clothing are produced per year, of which 73% is incinerated or landfilled according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

Following on the successful launch of Worn Again’s research and development pilot plant, the teams will be building a larger demonstration facility converting polyester and cotton garments into polyester pellets and cellulosic pulp that can further be re-spun into new fibers.

The vast majority of garments currently produced are made out of mixed cotton and polyester fibers, where sustainable production has been increasingly challenged. Cultivation of cotton is linked to the use of huge amounts of water necessary for its growth and polyesters are associated with non-recyclable waste. Current technologies to recycle textile fibers back into virgin-quality fibers are almost non-existent. It is estimated that only 1% of clothing is recycled into new garments because these are rather complex systems containing various types of fibers, dyes, fillers and additives, making them difficult to recycle.

Torsten Wintergerste, Division President of Chemtech, comments: “I am honored by the trust Worn Again and H&M have given me to become Chairman of the Board. Sulzer is highly committed to lead the development of sustainable processes by leveraging our extensive experience in separation technology. This is why we are happy to be the technology expert for Worn Again and support its vision to eradicate textile waste and get to a world where resources are kept in constant circulation. We look forward to seeing our key technologies in operation at this new recycling facility as well as collaborating on future circular projects.”

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Sulzer helps forward-looking businesses in a variety of industries reduce their environmental impact, to date encompassing industries such as the energy sector, plastic packaging, steel manufacturing as well as textiles.

Sulzer is a global leader in fluid engineering. We specialize in pumping, agitation, mixing, separation and application technologies for fluids of all types. Our customers benefit from our commitment to innovation, performance and quality and from our responsive network of 180 world-class manufacturing facilities and service centers across the globe. Sulzer has been headquartered in Winterthur, Switzerland, since 1834. In 2019, our 16'500 employees delivered revenues of CHF3.7 billion. Our shares are traded on the SIX Swiss Exchange (SIX: SUN). www.sulzer.com

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