Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company’s public news and information website.

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to concern over potential supply disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the desire to avoid supply deficits, Songwon reports. The company’s key Polymer Stabilizers business, in particular, benefited from this increased demand during the quarter. Despite the COVID-19 outbreak leading to an extended Chinese New Year and paralysing China’s automotive industry, the Performance Chemicals division started 2020 stronger than expected, Songwon says. The Tin Intermediates/Catalyst business was able to take advantage of competitors’ line stoppages in Europe and capture new business, it reports. As a result, the division increased its capacities in 1Q 2020 to meet the higher demand, especially for Tin Intermediates. In addition, the division’s PVC Additives business also saw a sequential rise in profitability compared to 4Q 2019.

By the time COVID-19 reached South Korea at the beginning of February, Songwon says it had implemented its continuity plan to counteract possible raw material shortages. It also increased capacity levels to match the rise in demand and to ensure that an optimal cost position for the group was maintained. In addition, Songwon’s plant in Pingdu, Shandong Province, was granted special permission by the Chinese government to remain open in order to supply chemicals necessary for the production of protective respiratory face masks.

Looking ahead, the company intended to focus on minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on both its own business and that of its customers, while remaining committed to improving profitability. In particular, Songwon said it would align its pricing strategies, continue to make operational improvements, and seek ways through its comprehensive global distributor network to further market penetration and capitalize on opportunities.

In related developments, Songwon has announced several new distribution partnerships to boost penetration of the European and North American markets. It has signed an exclusive agreement with Biesterfeld France concerning the distribution of its polymer stabilizers range in France. It has also expanded its partnership with Bodo Moller Chemie in Europe, signing two further exclusive distribution agreements, again covering its comprehensive range of polymer stabilizers. Bodo Moller Chemie Benelux NV is now supplying customers in Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands while Bodo Moller Chemie UK Ltd has taken on this responsibility in the UK and Ireland. Songwon has additionally inked a deal with Bodo Moller Chemie Russia for the distribution of its Songnox brand of fuel and lubricant antioxidant additives in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Finally, to ensure a reliable supply of its products and provide on-the-spot services for customers in the growing Canadian market, the South Korean company has entered into a partnership with AS Paterson Co Ltd, an established distributor of performance chemicals across the region.

More information: www.songwon.com

Nabaltec reports ‘modest’ quarterly figures in challenging environment

For the first quarter of 2020, Germany’s Nabaltec AG earned €45.4 million in revenues, a decline of 6.4% compared to revenues of €48.5 million in the same period last year. The Schwandorf-based company’s operating profit (EBIT) amounted to €2.5 million in the first three months of 2020, less than half of the EBIT figure of €5.8 million garnered in the first quarter of 2019. The EBIT margin was 5.9% (12.1% in 1Q 2019). Quarterly EBITDA reached €6.1 million, down from €9.0 million in 1Q 2019.

Although the results in the first quarter of 2020 ‘lagged behind’ its expectations compared to the same period last year, Nabaltec’s CEO Johannes Heckmann says that the company ‘did very well in terms of revenues’ in light of the fact that the environment has become ‘significantly more challenging and complex’. He reports a certain amount of price pressure on the sales side, while orders from customers ‘have been significantly more volatile and short-term in nature’. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic began to have a noticeable impact on Nabaltec’s business during the first quarter, particularly in Asia, with Southern Europe also affected since March, Heckmann says.

In 1Q 2020, sales of the company’s eco-friendly, aluminium hydroxide-based flame retardant fillers and functional plastics additives generated revenues of €31.7 million for the Functional Fillers product segment, compared to revenues of €32.5 million achieved in the same quarter of last year. Revenues in the Specialty Alumina product segment amounted to €13.7 million, down from €15.9 million in 1Q 2019. The boehmite product range continued to perform well, with e-mobility as the key driver, posting growth of more than 40% over 1Q 2019 despite the fact that a large majority of the sales were generated in Asia,
and that sales performance was very difficult to predict following the shutdowns in China and other key Asian countries during the first quarter, Nabaltec comments.

The company expected the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to be ‘a heavy drag’ in the second quarter and anticipated revenues to be ‘down significantly’ in both product segments from the previous quarter as well as from the same quarter of 2019. Given the current environment, Nabaltec withdrew the forecast provided in its 2020 Annual Report [ADPO, June 2020, p. 9] and will not be issuing a new one ‘for the time being’, it says. According to Heckman, the company believes it is both well-positioned in the long run and well-equipped currently in terms of liquidity.

More information: www.nabaltec.de

**EQUIPMENT**

Ampacet targets high precision and micro-moulding with LIAD gravimetric feeder offerings

Following its recent acquisition of Israeli feeder and blender specialist LIAD Weighing and Control Systems [ADPO, June 2020, pp. 10–11], Ampacet has been quick to introduce new gravimetric feeder solutions to the wider market. LIAD Smart ColorSave 1000 Gravimetric Feeder reportedly offers the industry’s highest level of precision in additive feeding, providing manufacturers with significant savings in masterbatch and production costs, while LIAD Smart ColorSave-Micro is said to be the first gravimetric feeder to target the fast-growing micro-moulding market.

ColorSave 1000’s industry-leading precision is the result of its unique design, being the only gravimetric feeder to feature an outer protective shell with an inner floating weigh hopper and single-point load cell, Ampacet reports. This design ensures accuracy, even in industrial settings affected by vibration and other outside influences, it explains. The feeder also uses advanced algorithms to deliver ‘unmatched dosing precision’ regardless of material density changes or other dynamic parameters, enabling manufacturers to feed expensive colours and additives at the lowest possible let-down ratios (LDRs) and at the low end of the tolerance specification to save on masterbatch costs, the company claims. The new feeder was designed to receive signals from an injection moulding machine in both the recovery and injection phases, ensuring that masterbatch is added throughout the process. It can be used with any injection moulding machine and is also suitable for use with extrusion and blow-moulding machines, and is capable of integration with the LIAD Smart Spectro, real-time inline colour management technology, the company says.

The high precision of the ColorSave 1000 feeder enables savings of up to 35% on masterbatch use when compared to remote batch-blending systems, up to 15% compared to a batch blender at the machine throat and up to 50% compared to a volumetric feeder, Ampacet reports. ‘The unmatched accuracy of ColorSave 1000 enables manufacturers to reap significant savings in masterbatch and production costs’, comments Doug Brownfield, commercial director of the company’s new CISystems Colour Integration business unit. ‘ColorSave pays for itself with potential savings of 0.5% of additive per cycle’, Brownfield adds.

Available for the first time in North America, ColorSave 1000 also offers the advantage of a user-friendly design, which allows operators to quickly empty components between jobs through a quick-purge auto system, resulting in further savings on labour and production time. In addition, the loss-in-weight controlling function allows optimum adjustment of operating points, according to Ampacet. The new feeder also features automatic calibration, which enables processors to consistently feed at the desired set point.

ColorSave-Micro permits accurate dosing down to one pellet making it ideal for medical micro-moulding applications requiring clean rooms as well as other areas that need precise continuous delivery of very small quantities of additives or colours, such as certain applications in the automotive and electronics industries, the company reports. The patented feeder uses a single vibrational, protected inner channel to eliminate exterior vibration and consistently deliver an accurate dose, it explains. ColorSave-Micro can accurately dispense materials with LDRs as low as 0.1% to 0.3%, facilitating more-efficient production of small parts or a reduction in material costs for extruded parts, Ampacet claims. Gravimetric weighing ensures consistent accuracy when compared to current volumetric micro feeders, the company adds.

The easy-to-clean feeder handles low feed rates and can be used for nearly all types of additives, including flowable, non-dusty powders or granules and micro pellets, Ampacet says. It can be used in injection moulding, extrusion and