

# Sustainable and environmentally friendly – Gerschon is getting greener

A conversation with Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht,  
Managing Director Gerschon GmbH

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Ms. Joppen-Leysaht, you took over the traditional company Gerschon 2 years ago. Gerschon GmbH offers a diverse range of bottles, tubes and cans with matching accessories for the cosmetics, pharmaceutical and food industries. What has changed since the acquisition in the company?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** Gerschon has got a new, fresh appearance and with the functional website including a shop that offers the customers in a few steps a good overview of our assortment as well as a simple order handling. This puts us more into the spotlight and makes our offer more transparent. Gerschon has always been strong in personal advice and support. Here, nothing has changed, because it is important to us to offer a very good service and to be close to our customers. At the moment we are cleaning up the assortment and supplementing it with new products. A visit to the website is always worthwhile, because here the new offers are the fastest. We are particularly focused on sustainability and are currently building our "Green Gerschon" line.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *By creating the label "Green Gerschon" you offer green PE products based on sugar cane. What gave you the impulse to do so?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** It was very important to me to find a material that is environmentally friendly, recyclable and at the same time aesthetically and provides a delivery reliability. All this is offered by the Green PE products based on sugar cane. Even as the plants grow up, they bind CO<sub>2</sub> from the air and thus prevent global warming. One tonne of Green PE can save up to

3.09 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. In addition, less water and energy is needed for the production, which results in environmental points that are collected from the beginning.

Green PE is very easy to process and has almost the same properties as its petroleum-based counterpart. Also it has a very nice feel and texture, it is aesthetically beautiful, it is pure and it is very suitable for cosmetics and pharmaceutical products.

Of course, it is very important for me as a retailer to be always deliverable when my customers are in need for their product. This is guaranteed with this product from renewable, bio-based raw material.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *How and where is the sugar cane Green PE produced?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** The product comes from the south of Brazil, thousands of miles away from the rainforest. Often former pasture areas of cattle are used for this purpose, all in all a total of 0.02% of agricultural land.

From the cultivated sugar cane ethanol is obtained after the production process of the sugar. Sugarcane bagasse is produced in this production process, which are plant fibers that represent an outstanding biological fuel. It provides the necessary energy for the entire complex manufacturing process from ethanol to green PE, i.e. no fossil resources are needed for the entire process. The result is a product that is completely recyclable and protects the environment during the growth and development process. Research has succeeded in further expanding the recycling chain of a substance and thus increasing resource efficiency.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *How can the Green PE cans be recycled? Are they biodegradable?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** The consumer can dispose the Green PE products over the recycling bin as the conventional polyethylene. Green PE is 100% recyclable.

Here we have a bio-based plastic, i.e. it is made from a renewable, organic product. This is not to be confused with biodegradable plastics, which may not be disposed of in the biowaste bin or on the compost here in Germany, but only on the yellow bin, local rules might differ a lot. Even if they were degraded in composting plants as part of the rotting periods, no value-giving components are produced, only CO<sub>2</sub> and water. This means that production is subject to a one-time use only, which also brings significant disadvantages from the point of view of the Federal Environmental Agency within the framework of the LCA.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *You talked about the importance of increasing resource efficiency. Would not PCR (post consumer recycling) then be the better alternative?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** There are two issues with PCR materials that makes it difficult to use those in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. For one thing, the quality of the material is very much dependent on what was collected. The color can also vary with each batch. Added to this is the security of delivery, which is influenced by the fact that only a few of the plastics collected via the recycling bin will be recycled, on the other hand, the granules are often bought up by large brands in order to secure their production. But my goal is to offer my customers a consistent quality and at the same time



delivery reliability, so I decided to go with Green PE. On request we can also supply products from PCR.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *To what extent will you expand your Green PE range?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** From February next year, we will be able to offer bottles in different sizes with different types of closures. Closures, spray heads and dispensers made of Green PE are not all that easy to find. The manufacturing processes are more complex than with a bottle or can, therefore it may take a few more months. But my credo is: let's start and expand continuously. Every Green PE product helps.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *In addition to the trend of packaging sustainability, individual single sizes are very popular because small formats are often beneficial for the consumer. How do you see this development?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** Gerschon has always traditionally offered a wide range of "mini" cans and bottles and I would also like to try a new product and look forward

to an offer in single sizes or a sample. Against the background of sustainability you should be very purposefully and make sure that the packaging is used several times and then disposed properly so that it can be recycled and reused. Every bag counts. When I go shopping, I always carry bags that I can use; whether plastic or paper, every reuse counts. And I always collected some cans and nice cardboard boxes in the cupboard Christmas that can be used as a gift wrap.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Closures show more and more wood and bamboo. Is that an option for you? Will you offer this?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** These materials do not convince me. Sure, they're renewable resources, but in my opinion every tree that is not felled, does help much more for our environmental balance as wooden covers that is made from it. Wooden lids are almost always provided with a thread made of aluminum or plastic; those materials are actually not able to be separated after use. Therefore, you can dispose of the lid only in the household waste, where it is burned. There is no recycling or

reuse. This is why I stand for the tree and choose a cover made of recyclable plastic.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *How do you see the development towards products made from bio-based materials?*

**Evelyn Joppen-Leysaht:** My impression is that the interest is growing strongly. The products asks for about 25–30% more in calculation so every customer has to decide to what extent he can price this in his articles or how he can communicate this to his customers. For natural cosmetics lines, it may be simpler because the end user has a greater willingness to invest more in packaging.

The higher the appreciation for climate-friendly products, the more important are bio-based plastics and so are the products made from them. The greatest environmental benefits are achieved through the conservation of fossil resources, effective collection of plastics, recycling and a second use.

**EURO COSMETICS:** *Thank you for the conversation.* ■