



Sustainable management from Mainz to Aguascalientes

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Shared interest in sustainability: Carlos Lozano de la Torre, governor of the Mexican state of Aguascalientes, visited the Mainz-based company Werner & Mertz with a delegation from his home. Minister of Economic Affairs Eveline Lemke and Reinhard Schneider were pleased by the visit. Photo: Werner & Mertz

What do a Mexican province and the Rhineland-Palatinate capital city have in common? They share a sustained interest in the environment, as evidenced by the visit of Carlos Lozano de la Torre, governor of Aguascalientes in north-central Mexico. La Torre and representatives of the embassy and consulate were guests of Minister of Economic Affairs Eveline Lemke, who visited the fourth smallest Mexican state last September with a delegation from the ministry. During a reciprocal visit to Mainz, Minister Lemke escorted the Mexican visitors to Werner & Mertz, where they were greeted by company owner Reinhard Schneider.

The Mexican delegation's interest in the Mainz-based business actually involved a small frog, specifically, one from a species threatened by extinction, which was discovered during excavation work for an automobile manufacturer's project in north-central Mexico. Twenty hectares of land had to be placed under protection in order to preserve the frog species.

"We have a great affinity for the frog," said Schneider as he invited the 11-member delegation and their Rhineland-Palatinate escort to a company presentation. The Mexicans, including the governor's wife Bianca Rivera Rio de Lozano and son Jose Carlos Lozano, were visibly impressed. Minister Lemke expressed her respect for the company when she mentioned the Most Trusted Brand award, which is given annually by the Reader's Digest. "You cannot believe how proud we are in Mainz," she said. Werner & Mertz recently received the award for the 14th consecutive year.

Awards alone are not enough for the company. Compared to other cleaning product manufacturers, Werner & Mertz was quick to focus on providing consumers with a concrete interpretation of the sustainability concept. "Sustainability has to be made real for the buyer," said Schneider in recounting the early days of the Frosch brand, which now makes up about 60 percent of the company's revenue. He also mentioned the successful interplay of geothermal energy, wind turbines, photovoltaic cells and glazing on the in-house ecological balance sheet. The company's efforts have been recognized across Europe and have earned LEED certification for sustainable construction.



The Mexican Governor Carlos Lozano de la Torre (far left) and his wife Bianca Rivera Rio de Lozano (far right), accompanied by Mexican Ambassador Patricia Espinosa (second from left), visited Werner & Mertz. Owner Reinhard Schneider and Minister of Economic Affairs Eveline Lemke were pleased by the visit. Photo credit: Bernd Essling / Werner & Mertz

"We are convinced that the integral interpretation of sustainability terminology is the key," said Schneider. His goals include a perfect recycling loop and concentration on native surfactants in order to reserve raw materials like palm kernel oil for the foodstuffs industry and thereby keep the technical and biological cycles closed. Along with the contents, the packaging is always part of the product. Werner & Mertz is behind the Recyclate Initiative in which flawless PET recyclates are obtained from PET plastic by means of laser spectroscopy. The company and its partners have been able to make better use of light plastic from the Yellow Bag and have contributed to the reduction of "ocean plastic" in the world's seas. In the end this measure serves to protect both animal and human life as the microscopically small particles from the floating plastic islands are ingested by fish and delivered directly to humans via the food chain.

"You are starting with a completely different premise," said Schneider as he encouraged the visitors to get involved. Werner & Mertz enjoys its role as eco pioneer and eagerly shares the achievements of the corporate sustainability philosophy. Sufficient quantities of PET recyclates are already available in the market, he said, with which we can generate added value. It's important to Schneider that Frosch products remain affordable. "We would like to make progress across the board," he said. "We don't want to market a high-priced product to a small clientele."



"I will deliver this message to our frogs back home," said la Torre with a smile and thanked his host for the informative insights and hospitality. The lively bilateral discussions continued during the tour of the company's factory and lunch in the employee restaurant. The Frosch has made a lasting impression on the Mexicans.

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