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MBT sector grows again

The positive development of the European market for mechanical biological waste treatment plants has accelerated considerably. About 80 MBT plants were newly commissioned in Europe over the past three years. The installed treatment capacities in Europe will increase to 46 million annual tons by 2016.

Mechanical biological treatment (MBT) plants produce refuse-derived fuel from municipal waste or treat this waste in such a way that it can be landfilled according to the specifications of the EU Landfill Directive. MBT technology was primarily developed as an alternative to waste incineration.

At present, there are about 330 operational mechanical biological treatment plants throughout Europe. They have the capacity to treat about 34 million tons of municipal waste annually. Since 2009, at least 25 MBT plants have been newly commissioned per year in Europe – more than ever before.

About five years ago, the future did not seem to be that bright for the MBT industry: many of the newly constructed MBT plants experienced technological problems, especially the ones in Germany. Some locations, like Buchen or Heilbronn, even had to shut down a few months after their commissionings. Acceptance of MBT plants decreased rapidly. In 2006, only 12 plants went operational throughout Europe. Instead, waste incineration was booming and became the dominant waste treatment technology.

By now, however, the demand for MBT plants is higher than ever before. Many “teething problems” have been solved. Furthermore, the MBT industry still benefits from the EU Landfill Directive as it has not been implemented sufficiently in many European countries yet.

In some countries, like France or Spain, MBT plants primarily get a chance because there are many concerns about waste incineration. In other states, like Great Britain, MBT plants benefit from the considerably increasing demand for refuse-derived fuels (RDFs). The amount of RDF that is being incinerated as a substitute of primary energy carriers grows in cement mills, coal-fired power plants or RDF power plants especially constructed for this purpose.

ecoprolog estimates the number of MBT plants in Europe to increase to about 450 and the plant capacities to rise from currently 34 million annual tons to 46 million tons by 2016.

ecoprolog’s recently published multi-client study “The European MBT market” analyses all important political, economic, managerial and technological trends of the European market for mechanical biological treatment plants. It can be ordered at www.ecoprolog.com

As a recognized industry expert, ecoprolog accompanies clients from Germany and abroad in working on implementation-oriented management issues with a political, technological or economic background in the sectors of environmental and energy technology. The company is active in the fields of strategy advisory, market and competition analyses as well as multi-client studies.