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China's expansion of waste incineration at all-time high

ecoprogram and Fraunhofer UMSICHT expect the worldwide installed incineration capacities to increase by about 60 million annual tons by 2015. Currently, about 2,150 waste incineration plants are operational throughout the world. China remains the booming market.

At present, approximately 5.6 billion euros are invested in the construction, expansion, modernisation and maintenance of waste incineration plants and RDF plants annually. By 2015, this amount will increase to 7.8 billion euros. The plant capacities throughout the world will grow from currently 210 million annual tons to 270 million tons.

The most important cause for this development remains the increasing shortage of landfill areas because of population increase, urban growth and growing land consumption.

A continuous economic growth at China's east coast and, hence, moving in of workers, leads to more waste and less space. China remains the international booming market: in 2010, about 50 per cent of all new installed capacities of the world were constructed there. At present, 61 further waste incineration plants, which are supposed to incinerate 18.6 million tons of municipal waste per year, are being constructed.

The European waste incineration market also started to move again, after dramatic overcapacities had evolved in some countries due to the economic crisis. The current recovery was initiated by the countries that only start to seriously implement EU specifications – among them Great Britain and Scandinavia particularly. Some Eastern European countries have also begun to develop a waste infrastructure that complies with EU standards. By contrast, attempts for such a development stagnate in many countries in Southern Europe. In light of the current financial difficulties in these countries, an improvement of this situation cannot be expected in the years to come – despite pressure from Brussels.

As evaluations of local subcontractors showed, emerging markets like Brazil, India or Russia will also not be able to fulfil the expectations that many put on them in the years to come. Missing legal regulation and the oftentimes available and inexpensive areas for landfilling prevent the economic operation of waste incineration plants in most cases.

ecoprogram/Fraunhofer UMSICHT now published the multi-client study "Waste to Energy 2011/2012" in the fourth edition. It is the world's most successful survey and the largest data collection on thermal waste recovery and can be ordered at www.ecoprogram.com.

Cologne-based consultancy ecoprogram specialises in the market of environmental and energy technology. The Fraunhofer Institute for Environmental, Safety and Energy Technology (UMSICHT) develops, examines and optimises techniques within the sectors of environmental engineering, safety engineering, process technology and energy technology. Together, ecoprogram and Fraunhofer UMSICHT elaborate market studies for selected sub-segments within environmental engineering.