

# Companies need a push in the right direction: The north can realise the dream of a Green EU

Original Article: Dagblad van het Noorden 23/1/21, written by Richold Brandsma

Translation: Jon Salt



Green industry is advancing in the north of the Netherlands. Image: Shutterstock

**2020, the “Corona year”, was a year in which chemical companies and plastic producers have made great strides in green development. But investment is needed to achieve the next steps. The Bio Cooperative Noord Nederland consortium has the details.**

Paques Biomaterials, based in Balk, Friesland is looking to build a production factory which can make the raw material granulate needed to produce packaging, out of waste water.

## **Emmen is a Serious Candidate**

Paques Biomaterials is going to scale up its demo plant into a production facility, and is looking towards the Getec industrial park in Emmen, Drenthe as a potential location. The factory will be up and running in three years, and will provide work for dozens of people.

More than 20 companies are working together within the Bio Cooperative Noord Nederland consortium. Paques Biomaterials is a good example of this, which the consortium wants to publicise this year. “Paques Biomaterials is a frontrunner” says Cor Kamminga, chair of Bio Cooperative.

## **Heart and Soul in Green Chemistry**

Yet there are still more frontrunners in the north. Kamminga: “Entrepreneurs are clearly showing that they are putting their heart and soul into improving and furthering green chemistry, and they want to go even further.”

One example of this furthering of green chemistry is CuRe Technology in Emmen. The company can recycle all sorts of PET, has a strong partnership with Coca Cola, and has recently announced that it is looking to scale up its demo plant to a full scale production facility to produce commercially.

The same is also true for Groningen-based company BioBTX. It is currently producing green aromatic compounds using green resources in a demo plant, and the company is looking to scale up production to a factory in Delfzijl, Groningen.

## **Time for a Push in the Right Direction**

Senbis in Emmen is already producing biodegradable cultivation wire for greenhouse horticulture, a discovery which has helped to drastically reduce the quantity of waste produced by the horticulture sector. In the last year Senbis also started commercially producing biodegradable granulate for artificial grass sports fields.

“All these entrepreneurs are showing that there is progress in green development being made in the north”, says Kamminga. “Its now time for an extra push in the right direction.”

This push should come from the EU, the Bio Cooperative is hoping. This hope is pinned on European Corona Recovery Funds. "The way to the EU is through The Hague. What we are now doing is telling the stories of the progress being made in this field by these frontrunners, to show the developments in the field in the north of the Netherlands."

### **It Would be a Mistake not to come out of the Coronacrisis Greener**

This refers to a call from the spring of last year. When Corona had just broken out, numerous top scientists published stories with the core message: It would be a mistake not to come out of the Coronacrisis greener.

The Corona Recovery Funds have a green label, and by bringing the stories of the progress in the north into the spotlight, the Bio Cooperative is hoping to secure investment for further development. "Building a factory costs millions. Before you know it you need 50 million or more. With this story about the frontrunners in the north we are hoping to come into the picture, since this is about hundreds of jobs, green jobs."

Alongside the story to acquire investment, the green development in the north has another effect, Kamminga believes. "Other companies in the country see that the north has a good climate for this sort of business activity. If you haven't invested in anything, you have nothing to show for it. But we have invested. Our ambitions are not only on paper, but are being made reality and are being actively invested in. This shows entrepreneurs throughout the country that this is the place to be to further develop their companies."

One example of this is Avantium. The company, which began as a start-up in Amsterdam, North Holland opened a demo plant a couple of years ago in Delfzijl where biomass is converted into the raw materials needed to make PET. Avantium are now looking to expand this demo plant in Delfzijl into a commercial factory. "Avantium is absolutely part of our story, as is Nedcam in Heerenveen, Friesland."



Cor Kamminga

### **2020 Seems to Have Been the Tipping Point**

Nedcam makes building structures for bridge parts and moulds, for example for boat building. The company wants to test, in a pilot installation, whether these parts and moulds can be made with the help of 3D printers. "Currently the constructions are still being made using foamwork and, for example, polystyrene. We want to 3D print them from recycled plastics, which would save an enormous amount of waste."

Sustainable production is not a new concept. But Kamminga says "I do have the idea that significant steps have been made in 2020. Whoever you talk to about it, it's obvious that people realise that this is the moment, and something needs to be done."

This is a story that Bio Cooperative wants to shout from the hills. "We have something to offer The Hague and the EU. We can make their green investments a reality."