

Sustainability in the brewery

May 8 2013, by Constanze Böttcher



A new research project helps agro-food sector small and medium size enterprises, such as bakeries and breweries, improve their environmental sustainability

Making food and drink production for more than 500 million people more eco-friendly is a key policy in Europe. About 99% of all [agro-food companies](#) in the European Union are small and medium size enterprises (SME). However, they often do not have the resources for making their production more environmentally friendly. An EU-funded project called "Ecofood-SME" therefore aimed at increasing their environmental awareness of and providing support for SME in the agro-food sector in

Germany and Spain.

All together 15 breweries and five bakeries participated in the German part of the project, lead by sustainable development consultancy Intechnica Consult, based in Nuremberg. The project targeted breweries in particular since many medium sized ones have "big [economic problems](#)", Volker Tröbs, consultant at Intechnica tells youris.com. Initially, consultants found that the companies were mainly concerned about their energy use and less interested in other [environmental issues](#) such as the company's [carbon footprint](#). "That's a matter of costs", Tröbs says, "the [energy use](#) of a brewery is very high".

However, they were not aware of other measures that help breweries and bakeries adopt a greener approach. About a third of the companies had previously registered for the European voluntary environmental management system EMAS. Thus, they already had experience in environmental measures and knew "this would pay off", Tröbs says. However, there was "little interest in [environmental] management systems", he adds, suggesting that these could help these breweries manage their cost and their [environmental impact](#) at the same time.

The German project partner thus brought suggestions for establishing [solar power systems](#) or re-using the [waste heat](#) from the brewing process. But "the implementation was up to the companies themselves," Tröbs says. The project partner set up a series of workshops, which were really helpful and "of practical relevance", according to Winfried Pikal, master brewer at the Brewery Wittmann. The brewery, based in Landshut, Bavaria, already had a solar power system. But they have now invested in a more energy efficient lighting system by using LED lamps, for example.

Experts believes that many small steps will be necessary to achieve a fundamental change in this sector. "[Breweries](#) and bakeries have a large

need to improve their energy management", Winfried Ruß tells youris.com. This professor of brewing technology at the University of Applied Sciences in Weihenstephan-Triesdorf, Germany further comments: "a solar power system can only contribute to a minor extent." However, offering workshops that directly address the companies' needs "is a good approach", he comments.

Other experts agree: "The workshops clearly exceeded other consultancy offers", says Daniela Gmelch, expert for [environmental management](#) systems at the regional chamber of crafts in Nuremberg, Germany. However, she is doubtful whether such workshops may be helpful to very small companies that lack people who would have the time to take part in such a project. In fact, only companies with more than 20 employees joined the project, Tröbs says.

The project coordinator believes that now, only shortly after the project has ended, more companies would take action to become more sustainable as the legal incentives have increased. In Germany, industrial companies can now only apply for reducing their energy taxes if they have an environmental or energy management system. Although most of the companies taken part have improved their energy management, Tröbs finds it hard to attribute the success solely to the project's efforts. But he is also confident: "We have established good methods for future work."

Provided by Youris.com

Citation: Sustainability in the brewery (2013, May 8) retrieved 24 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-05-sustainability-brewery.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.