**Grass Instead of Wood**

Uwe D'Agnone has been successfully manufacturing innovative paper products for a long time. A few years ago, a TV – documentary inspired him to raise an important question, which he was not able to abandon any more:

*How can we produce paper in a sustainable way?*

Indeed, despite digitization, the demand for paper increases for example in the form of packaging for online trade. Raw materials for this form of packaging are wood and waste paper. However, in this particular area, waste paper cannot be a permanent solution, as it cannot be re-used infinitely in the recycling process. Besides, there are even more disadvantages from an ecological point of view: for example deforested areas as well as long transport paths, sometimes from one continent to another. Furthermore, huge quantities of water and chemistry are used in the processing cycle, paired with a high level of energy consumption and the resulting CO2 – emissions.

The reason for these high quantities of water and chemistry lies in the growth of the trees. Trees require ‘lignin’ to grow. ‘Lignin’ gives them the necessary stability, since it lignifies the cells. In paper-making however, this lignin must be removed in a complex chemical way. In the ‘chemical bath’ extraction, 6,000 liters of water are used per ton of paper.

"If anything that grows in height contains lignin, which then has to be extracted, why not take something that grows in density” was the resulting idea of Uwe D'Agnone, Founder and Managing Director of Creapaper GmbH.

No sooner said than done: Uwe started producing paper from grass or hay and - at the same time -developed an environmentally-friendly production process.

"Grass is especially suitable, as it can be grown anywhere, it grows faster than wood, can be procured at short notice and when processing it into paper it does not require any chemicals and consumes less energy. Above all, 6,000 liters of water are saved per ton of paper pulp", underlines D'Agnone.

And the success proves him right: In collaboration with the paper industry, Uwe has produced a wide range of paper products, such as corrugated cardboard, folding cartons, envelopes and brochures.

The suitability of this innovation has been tested by major corporations in a wide range of commercial applications since 2015. In the meantime, some of the best-known food manufacturers and retailers are on the customer list of Creapaper. In addition, the process of making paper from grass is internationally patented.

As of today, up to 50 percent of previously used wood pulp could be replaced. This would mean a CO2-reduction by 75 percent in the paper-making process. The idea of a sustainable paper alternative made of grass could convince the jury of the 2017 - KfW Award who ranked the project as the national winner. Investors are also convinced of this ground-breaking idea. "Thanks to the support of the “Bürgschaftsbank Baden-Württemberg” in the acquisition of a modern production plant, we are now able to continue our activities and expand and meet the demand of our customers by producing "green" paper ", says D'Agnone.

**Creapaper GmbH. Participants: Volksbank in Ortenau l Bank l Bürgschaftsbank Baden-Württemberg Funded with: Resource Efficiency Financing / InnovFin70 with a 70% guarantee, Founded in 2012 l 15 employees l www.creapaper.de, www.graspapier.de**