



Driven by expertise

Sukano enables the next generation of drinking straw

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Bioplastics Masterbatches Additive and compounding leader Sukano works with leading bioplastics innovator NatureWorks to create materials that enable a high-performance, renewable, biobased drinking straw that could revolutionize the market.

Schindellegi, Switzerland, August 29, 2017 – Sukano, a world leader in the development and production of additive and colour masterbatches and compounds for polyester and specialty resins, today announced the results of its initiative to rethink the materials used to manufacture drinking straws.

Using Sukano's additive masterbatches portfolio based on NatureWorks' Ingeo™ PLA bioplastic, it is now possible to have a material for straws that achieves the expected performance attributes, is renewably-sourced and manufactured cleanly – yet still provides desired after-use options such as compostability.

An alternative to oil-based plastics

Straws, today made mostly from polypropylene, present a variety of technical challenges for alternative new materials seeking to bring new functionality.

For example, narrow U-shaped straws for juice boxes must be articulated and have a high flexibility modulus. As straws are manufactured, edges must be cut smoothly to prevent unsafe sharp or rough edges and visual aesthetics such as transparency are also critical. These are just a few of the many specifications new materials must meet for adoption into this market application. Solving this problem required a unique combination of innovation and expertise. The demand for disposable straws is expected to grow, driven in part by consumer desire for convenience, meals on the go, and consumption of more specialty drinks. There is therefore a place for materials that provide complete, responsible lifecycle solutions while providing the functionality consumers expect.

Straw Trek – the next generation

So when Sukano and NatureWorks, two global market leaders in PLA – and its modification for optimal product performance – got together, a new, broad market opportunity was born. Sukano masterbatches reduce the brittleness of PLA, which allows precise cutting during production and avoids splintering and rough edges. Combining melt enhancer additives in Ingeo™-based PLA masterbatches, Sukano

page 1 / 3



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page 2 / 3

concentrates promote dimensional stability and greater flexibility without cracking at temperatures of 110° to 120°C. The additive masterbatches formulations are also designed to maintain the high transparency required in straws.

Rethinking plastics

The last decade has seen the advent of plastics made from renewable resources (or bioplastics) entering the mainstream for packaging.

Bioplastics like polylactic acid (PLA) have been viewed as sustainable in sourcing, manufacture and after-use – but, until today, they were unable to meet the market's criteria for performance in straws and replace the use of polypropylene. There is an opportunity to broaden the perspective on bioplastic materials for packaging.

"We are thrilled that this collaboration between key players in the value chain allows us to bring an innovative alternative to the market. Using our combined experience, we are able to modify Ingeo™ PLA to customize its performance for a new end market – providing benefits to consumers and companies," comments Alessandra Funcia, Head of Marketing at Sukano.

"At NatureWorks, we are helping rethink plastics. The replacement of conventional oil-based polypropylene by Ingeo™ in drinking straws is just one example of how bioplastics can help address sustainability, while still providing the high performance material required for this application," concludes Steve Davies, Commercial Director – NatureWorks Performance Packaging.

About Sukano

Sukano is a world leader in the development and production of additive and colour masterbatches and compounds for polyester and specialty resins. The company develops innovative products and services for oil and bio-based polymers for applications such as thin and thick films, bottles and containers, fibers, filaments, and sheets.

Founded in 1988 and headquartered in Switzerland, Sukano has a global distribution network and three production facilities strategically located in Europe, the Middle-East & Africa, the Americas and Asia.

Providing unparalleled service, knowhow, and quality to its customers worldwide, Sukano is the global partner of choice for plastic converters and brand owners.

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page 3 / 3

About NatureWorks

NatureWorks is an advanced materials company offering a broad portfolio of renewably sourced polymers and chemicals to the packaging, polymers, fibers, and chemicals markets. With performance and economics that compete with oil-based plastics and fibers, naturally advanced [Ingeo™](#) polymers are valued for their unique functional properties and used in a range of products from coffee capsules and electronics to diapers and wipes. Creating performance through chemistry, [Vercet™](#) lactide-based solutions help innovators realize significant, measurable performance and cost advantages in products such as C.A.S.E. (coatings, adhesives, sealants, and elastomers), toners, and surfactants. NatureWorks is jointly owned by Thailand's largest and ASEAN's leading integrated petrochemical and refining company, PTT Global Chemical, and Cargill, which provides food, agriculture, financial and industrial products and services to the world. www.natureworkslc.com; follow NatureWorks on Twitter [@natureworks](https://twitter.com/natureworks)