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Sulzer enabling production of 70'000 tonnes of biomass pellets per year – a carbon-neutral alternative to coal

The innovative EU-funded Arbaflame project is aiming to produce 70'000 tonnes biomass-based combustibles per year to enable clean power generation. The biomass pellets are made of wood and can be used as a 100% sustainable alternative to coal in power plants to produce carbon-neutral power. Sulzer Chemtech's separation equipment will play a key role in Arbaflame's pellet production process, minimizing energy usage while maximizing the recovery of highly useful chemicals generated as by-products in the process, further supporting the circular economy.

Arbaflame's facility in Grasmo, outside of Oslo, Norway, will produce 70'000 tonnes of 'biocoal' pellets per year. These are made of wood biomass and can be used as fuel in place of coal in power plants. The production processes leading to the pellets also generate condensate containing key chemicals, namely methanol and furfural. The methanol will be used to produce energy to power the plant, thereby enabling circularity, while furfural is expected to be used as building block in a number of downstream manufacturing processes.

Sulzer Chemtech provided a separation unit that will help Arbaflame recover these materials, maximizing the self-sufficiency of the plant while supporting the use of renewable resources in the energy and manufacturing sectors.

In order to minimize the environmental footprint of the recovery process, Sulzer Chemtech's engineers developed a highly efficient system. In particular, the company selected distillation methods to recover the chemicals according to their ability to deliver the highest purity chemicals while requiring minimal energy input. Also, the setup was engineered to be able to reuse energy in each stage of the distillation process, further increasing efficiency and sustainability.

Finally, Sulzer Chemtech was able to use its advanced skills and experience to ensure Arbaflame could benefit from the separation unit as soon as it was installed. Rune Brusletto, Chief Technology Officer at Arbaflame, commented: "The modular recovery unit provided by Sulzer Chemtech is the best investment we have made in our facility last year. It also came fully equipped and piped, ready to be operated. The collaboration with Sulzer Chemtech was extremely successful, as the company was able to deliver the unit in a very short time and has helped us streamline our operations."

Torsten Wintergerste, Division President at Sulzer Chemtech, concluded: "We are delighted by Arbaflame's positive feedback. This innovative project shows how our processing technologies can contribute to creating a greener economy. We look forward to providing more companies with the tools to maximize the sustainability of their operations in future."



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