

For immediate release

Koehler converts power plant in Oberkirch to biomass and cuts more than 150,000 metric tons of CO₂ a year

- **Koehler plays its part in meeting Paris Climate Agreement goals**
- **Lower CO₂ footprint for Oberkirch/Germany as a result of converting combined heat and power plant from bituminous coal to biomass**
- **Investment of just under 60 million euros (73 million US dollars)**

Oberkirch/Germany, May 26, 2021 – The Koehler Group is planning to fully convert its power plant at its Oberkirch/Germany location to biomass in the coming years. This change is part of Koehler’s sustainability strategy, which includes the goal of producing more energy from renewable sources than is required for its paper production operations by 2030. Koehler Group CEO Kai Furler is thrilled with the plan: “By switching from bituminous coal to biomass as the primary fuel for our location here in Oberkirch, we will be cutting more than 150,000 metric tons of CO₂ emissions a year.”

At its Oberkirch location, Koehler operates three paper machines, including the associated auxiliary systems. The paper processing and drying processes require enormous amounts of energy, which is why the company decided to build its own power plant all the way back in 1943. Then, in 1986, a new power plant was built and would be followed up by multiple changes all the way to the plant’s current expansion stage. Today’s power plant delivers a total of approx. 100,000 MW/h of electric power and 330,000 metric tons of steam per year for production. In addition, the resulting waste heat is used for the open-air public swimming pool in Oberkirch. The fuel used to date has consisted not only of bituminous coal, but also refuse-derived fuels such as waste from paper production in the form of paper sludge. There are 21 employees who work on keeping the power plant running 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Sustainable fuel will help keep “Koehler promise for 2030”

The company has had a number of extremely successful projects designed to reduce the energy consumed in its paper production operations for many years now. A few years ago, the company declared that it would be producing more energy from renewable sources than required for its own needs by 2030. This is why the company is now converting its coal-fired power plant at the Oberkirch location to biomass. With its Fuel Emissions Trading Act, the German government made it more difficult to use fossil fuels, which is why Koehler will be implementing its plans for the conversion three years earlier than originally planned.

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Wood chips instead of coal reduce CO₂ emissions significantly

External planning agencies were consulted when planning the conversion, and a total of 13 different versions and conceptual designs were fleshed out. Due to reasons of cost-effectiveness and wanting to minimize the impact on the surroundings, the final decision was to convert the existing combined heat and power plant to biomass as a fuel. The change represents an investment of just under 60 million euros (73 million US dollars) for Koehler, and will enable the company to produce the energy it needs for its paper production operations in the future with wood chips, green waste, and mill residue. This means that the fuel will be CO₂-neutral, as well as a renewable raw material obtained from the region. This material will be delivered by truck using bypass B 28.

Commissioning at the end of 2024

The plans to convert the power plant to use a renewable raw material started all the way back in 2018. Needless to say, this conversion cannot be carried out overnight, as it will require extensive technical modifications.

Koehler plays its part in meeting Paris Climate Agreement goals

In the Paris Agreement from 2015, 190 parties, including the European Union, committed themselves to taking measures to keep global warming significantly under 2 °C. Private companies were called on to contribute to emission reductions within this context. Kai Furler says: "With the conversion away from fossil fuels, Koehler is proactively playing its part in reducing global warming." For Oberkirch, this means a significantly reduced impact from CO₂ emissions.

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