

Interview

Wuppermann production to be completely CO2-neutral by 2025

Strategic action plan: Wuppermann production to be CO2-neutral by 2025

Interview with Johannes Nonn, Spokesman of the Executive Board of Wuppermann AG

Mr Nonn, more and more companies are focusing on the topic of sustainability and climate protection. How does Wuppermann AG position itself in this regard?

As an energy-intensive company, the topic is of outstanding importance to us, and as a major European steel processor, it is our goal to play a pioneering role here.

What does CO2-neutral production mean at Wuppermann?

It means that all emissions directly related to the production process are to be reduced to zero by 2025 at the latest. I think this is a very ambitious target compared to our competitors.

What is your personal motivation when it comes to climate protection?

It is a scientific fact that global warming is essentially caused by CO2. And industrialisation has demonstrably played a significant role in this. In this respect, I see it as the duty of the heavily industrialised countries in particular to take on a pioneering role and work on reducing CO2 emissions.

We all discuss climate protection in our families and are asked about it by our children and grandchildren. They question the topic, and we often enough owe them sensible answers. This is another reason why we in the management of the Wuppermann Group see it as our responsibility to act.

What is the entrepreneurial motivation of Wuppermann AG?

We are convinced that in the long term only those industrial companies will survive in Europe that are CO2-free and produce sustainably. Besides CO2, there are other sustainability issues that are just as important: We are just now reading in the newspapers again how important raw materials and the highest possible recycling rate in production are, and there will also be further challenges with regard to other emissions.

Contact:

Wuppermann AG
Ottostr. 5
51381 Leverkusen
Germany

Kai Marwig
Leader Business Development &
Communication

Phone: +49 (0) 2171/5000-815
Fax: +49 (0) 2171/5000-802
Kai.Marwig@wuppermann.com
www.wuppermann.com

Janet Dunkel
Corporate Communication & Marketing

Phone: +49 (0) 2171/5000-811
Fax: +49 (0) 2171/5000-802
Janet.Dunkel@wuppermann.com
www.wuppermann.com

It is interesting that we have learnt in recent years that measures to reduce CO₂ can be quite economical. Many of our measures to reduce CO₂ emissions have also led to a reduction in costs. This means that economy and ecology are not necessarily mutually exclusive!

What political framework conditions are needed for implementation?

The availability of clean and affordable energy is a basic prerequisite. Here, green electricity plays a very prominent role. In other words, we will only succeed in decarbonising Europe while maintaining prosperity if we have affordable green electricity available.

We at Wuppermann also want to make our contribution to this by investing not only in measures to reduce CO₂, but also specifically in our own generation of green energy. This will play an important role for us in the future.

What contribution can Wuppermann make to decarbonising the steel industry?

The main burden of CO₂ emissions arises in the steel-producing industry. Wuppermann, however, is a steel processing company. And in steel processing, our process is far superior to other processes for galvanising strip steel: While conventional galvanising processes are based on fossil energies, our process is electricity-based. This means we can galvanise our strip on the basis of green electricity - a significant competitive advantage in terms of sustainability.

What distinguishes the Wuppermann process from the competition?

The majority of our energy requirements are generated in our three strip galvanising plants. On these lines we produce over one million tonnes of strip galvanised steel a year using the so-called "heat-to-coat" process. In this process, no recrystallisation annealing takes place, so no gas-fired furnaces are needed. The strip is heated purely inductively, i.e. electricity-based.

What specific measures are you implementing?

We are currently in the process of converting our electricity supply contracts to CO₂-free supply. For example, since 1 January this year we have been using one hundred per cent green electricity from hydropower at both production sites in Austria, and in the Netherlands we will then purchase all our electricity from wind power from 1 January 2022.

At our other two production sites in Hungary and Poland, we are also working on switching to CO₂-free or green electricity. We are also investing in our own electricity generation and have decided to install photovoltaic systems with a capacity of three megawatts

on three hall roofs this year. This could supply over 1,700 households!

We also want to focus on other issues such as the recycling rate. At the Moerdijk site, we now have a recycling rate of over 99 per cent. But we are not satisfied with that, we are aiming for 100 per cent.

What does that mean for your customers and your products?

It has no influence at all on the quality of our products. Hot-dip galvanised strip is very durable due to its corrosion protection. Furthermore, it is fully recyclable, so it really is a sustainable product.

We want to provide our customers with a CO₂-free product. In our case, this means that we do not add any further CO₂ to the material we buy in our processing. This gives us a competitive advantage, which we are happy to pass on to our customers.

However, we do not want to develop complex calculation and pricing models. We are convinced that companies without CO₂-free production will not be able to survive in the market in the long run. Therefore, we see this as a basic requirement for us and our customers to be able to survive in the market.

What data are your measures based on?

The results stem from a study conducted by the Fraunhofer Institute UMSICHT in 2020. In this study, it was proven that our "heat-to-coat" process has an emission advantage of over 30 per cent compared to conventional strip galvanising processes, and of course we are a little proud of that. Against the backdrop of the conversion of the electricity supply to renewable sources, this advantage has increased considerably and we want to have the value recalculated in 2022.

About half of the CO₂ content comes from zinc. Zinc smelting is a very energy-intensive process, but this process is also electricity-based. So theoretically, it is already possible to represent this process from renewable energies as well, and these are precisely the discussions we are now having with the zinc suppliers.

How will Wuppermann continue to take responsibility in the future?

We are continuously working on improving sustainability in our company. We want to achieve this mainly by sourcing as much renewable energy as possible, reducing the specific electricity consumption per tonne and by investing in our own renewable energies.

In a year's time, we will be using CO₂-free electricity at the majority of our sites. By 2025, we want to implement this at all of our locations, which means that we then want to obtain one hundred percent CO₂-free electricity. In ten years, we want to obtain one hundred percent of our electricity from renewable energy sources.

We will not be satisfied with a recycling rate of 99 per cent either, because the goal must be to recycle 100 per cent. „Highest corrosion protection with lowest CO2 emissions“ – that’s what we want measured by!

Thank you for the interview.