

Sonett - ever so young: 40 years of Sonett

The eco-pioneer for organic laundry detergents and cleaning agents celebrated its anniversary with an "Open-house Day".



In the wake of the nascent health food movement, Sonett was founded 1977 as one of the first manufacturers of organic laundry detergents and cleaning agents. The company's approach to management and quality is based on anthroposophical spiritual science. Sonett employs 60 people nowadays and sells their products worldwide in more than 45 countries.

This was reason enough to adequately celebrate the company's anniversary with an open-house day. With the sun brightly shining, the guests were given the opportunity to receive vivid impressions of the enterprise. Informative guided tours were offered, there were water experiments with the „Institut für Strömungswissenschaften“ („Institute for Flow Analysis“), Herrischried. On offer were furthermore: a puzzle to recognize fragrances, children's soap kneading, movies, lectures and music.

Caring and feeling responsible for water as the essence of all life prompted the idea of the Sonett product range. The development of the Sonett laundry detergents and cleaning agents resulted from the research which the natural scientist Johannes Schnorr did at the "Institut für Strömungswissenschaften" (Institute for Flow Analysis) in Herrischried at the end of the 1960s. Using the drop-picture method he demonstrated the extent to which, even then, water was polluted by synthetic laundry detergent surfactants that cannot be degraded by nature. The shock regarding the state of the water prompted the initiative for the concept of a novel laundry detergent, which would be environmentally

compatible and wholly biodegradable, using raw materials sparingly. This was the moment when the **Sonett modular system** was born. It is only if laundry detergent, softener and bleaching agent are being measured out separately, that the washing substances can be used to their best advantage.

40 years later SONETT is **one of the leading manufacturers** for organic laundry detergents and cleaning agents in **Germany**. For years the company has registered double digit growth rates. SONETT products are distributed worldwide in 45 countries, not only European countries but also Japan, Korea, China, Australia, Kazakhstan, Georgia and USA.

Multiply-certified product range

The Sonett product range to this date comprises 51 products. Sonett products, on principle, contain no enzymes, petrochemical surfactants, synthetic fragrances, dye-stuffs, preservatives, GMOs and nanotechnology, and they are wholly biodegradable. Olive oil, rape oil, sunflower oil, coconut respectively palm oil used for the soap production are 100 % derived from certified organic cultivation. All of the essential oils are 100% organically grown as well. The entire assortment is certified fulfilling the criteria of Ecogarantie, the currently highest quality standard for laundry detergents and cleaning agents worldwide. Since 2011 Sonett has been certified as a „climate neutral“ company according to the STOP CLIMATE CHANGE Standard CO₂.

Sonett has also been certified in conformity with the CSE Standard (Certified Sustainable Economics) by the Society for Applied Business Ethics since 2015. Contrary to product certifications this label takes into account the entire company. Apart from the ecological requirements the company's social and ethical inclinations are assessed as well.

Social Commitment

With their move into Deggenhausertal in 1996 Sonett became Lehenhof's Camphill Workshops' neighbour and partner. At present 25 people with special needs from Lehenhof work exclusively for Sonett. Three employees of the Lehenhof Workshops work in Sonett's plant itself, a cooperation which is being considered highly enriching for both parties involved. Furthermore there is permanent co-operation with the Rehab Centre for Drug Addicts „Sieben Zwerge“ (Seven Dwarfs) as well as with the Georgenhof, an institution for children and adolescents with behavioural problems. The basis for Sonett's cooperation and their involvement in manifold social activities is their belief that in today's business life it is cooperation and mutual support that counts rather than competition and one's own interest. In order to, for future times, retain this character of a business management based on partnership, the company's proprietor is a non-profit foundation that protects the enterprise from being bequeathed or sold.

„Washing and cleaning are cultural achievements that, on the one hand, are beneficial to man, and, on the other, pollute water. We consider it our task to, in a constructive manner, harmonize them with nature and, above all, water“.

(Beate Oberdorfer)

A historic overview of 40 years of Sonett

- 1967/68: The scientist Johannes Schnorr, by using the drop-picture method, discovers the enormous water pollution caused by laundry detergent surfactants and, as a result, develops the "modular system for doing your laundry", which is its most economical and environmentally friendly way.
- 1977: Werner Geibel sets up the Sonett Company. Sonett expands in the wake of the health food movement.
- 1989: Beate Oberdorfer and Gerhard Heid join Sonett and produce part of the products at the Freiheithof in Sauldorf/Roth - at the beginning in an old barn.
- 1992: Gerhard Heid and Beate Oberdorfer take over Sonett.
- 1996: Sonett OHG moves into the old brick factory in Deggenhausertal.

2003: New-build of the Sonett Liquid Production and a warehouse.

- 2005: Establishing the "gemeinnützige Stiftung" (non-profit foundation) Sonett.
- 2006: Extension of "ProDidact": 600m² warehouse, 3 flats for female and male employees, seminar room "Sonett Culture and Education".
- 2007: Cooperating with Probila-Unitrab Sonett develops eco standards for laundry detergents and cleaning agents. The certification label Ecogarantie is created, which, at present, is the most stringent eco label worldwide. All of the Sonett products are Ecogarantie certified. In addition, Sonett contributes to developing the new BNN Guidelines for Product Ranges of Laundry Detergents and Cleaning Agents.
- 2008: Annex, 1,000m² pallet warehouse, 12 storage tanks of 12,000 - litres each, extension of the bottling area.

2011: New fully automatic bottling plant with a capacity of 3,000 bottles per hour.

- 2014: Changing the Sonett OHG (General Partnership) into Sonett GmbH (Ltd. Co.) in order to completely „neutralize“ the capital of the Sonett company as a whole.

- 2015/16: Building a new warehouse with a storage capacity of 2,500 m² and a bridge to the bottling area, plus extending and merging storage facility and dispatch office into an area with 400 m².
- Planning to enlarge the liquid bottling area in 2018.

Sonett the eco-pioneer of 40 years: Prizes and awards

2017

A national Champion of the European Business Award 2016/17

2015

Sustainability Prize of the International Conference of the Lake Constance (IBK); the prize amounting to 15,000 Euros we donated to the "Flüchtlingsinitiative" (Initiative for Refugees) of the Georghof Bambergen

2014

Alternative Health Prize by the Health Insurance Co. BKK advita honouring the in-house Health Insurance and the company's social involvement.

2013

Accepted into the Funding Programme within the scheme of the European Funds for Regional Development in Baden Württemberg „Spitze auf dem Land! Technologieführer in Baden-Württemberg“ (EFRE) („Top in rural areas! Technological leader in the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg“)
The 400,000 Euros funded were used for building the new warehouse and logistics centre in 2015/16 (construction costs 2,5 million).

2013

iF Communication Design Award for the new Corporate Design
(Graphic designer: Karl Lierl)

2012

Red-dot design award for the new Corporate Design (Graphic designer: Karl Lierl)

2008

Sustainability Prize of the Ethikbank (Ethics Bank)

May 2017

40 Years of Sonett: Characteristics and Hallmarks

Alternative business management, foundation model

Sonett's proprietors transferred their shares to a non-profit foundation. Benefits remain with the company or are allocated to the foundation. The enterprise can no longer be sold or bequeathed. The company's capital is not considered a private affair but common good.

Ecological pioneers since 1977

for ecological laundry detergents and cleaning agents, for developing the Sonett Modular System and the outstanding Sonett quality. Sonett products are to be purchased worldwide in more than 45 countries.

Social commitment

Since 1996 Sonett has cooperated closely with the Camphill Workshops Lehenhof, an institution for people with special needs. Long-standing cooperation with the Rehab Centre for Drug Addicts „Sieben Zwerge“ (Seven Dwarfs) and with the Georgenhof – Bamberg, a boarding school for children and adolescents with behavioural problems. As from 2017 supporting the educational emergency measures of the „Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners e.V.“. (“Friends of Waldorf Education“) for refugees and children, who have fallen victim to the miserable circumstances of the times.

Certifications

All of Sonett products bear the ECOGARANTIE label, premium label for ecological laundry detergents and cleaning agents. The company has been certified as “climate neutral” since 2011, fulfilling the criteria of Stop Climate Change – a continuing process with an annual concept of reducing CO₂ emissions. Since 2015 certified according to the CSE Standard (Certified Sustainable Economics) by the Society for Applied Business Ethics. Apart from the ecological requirements it also takes into account the company's social and ethical inclinations.

Unique: Balsamic essences from the oloid mixer

Apart from the 100 % biodegradability of all ingredients, the Sonett products distinguish themselves by a special quality feature: Sonett adds balsamic essences derived from spices, resins and noble minerals to every product, essences that are rhythmatised in an oloid mixer in lemniscatic figure-eight movements. Furthermore all the processing water (approx. 10,000 l daily) is swirled by passing through twelve egg-shaped glass vessels. In order for the water to be able to penetrate the substance and loosen the dirt, every laundry detergent must neutralize the surface tension, thus also eliminating the vital power of the water. To return this vitality to water and nature is the very reason for these rhythmic treatments.