

Jürgen Pfitzer and Helmut Nägele, winners in the "SMEs/research" category

Plastics are a growing environmental issue. Since 1950 the world has discarded over a billion tonnes of plastic, and over 100 million tonnes are added to the heap each year. Jürgen Pfitzer and Helmut Nägele of the Fraunhofer Institute for Chemical Technology (ICT) developed an eco-friendly alternative to plastic, a 100% biodegradable material made from waste products from the paper-making process which can be shaped just as easily as plastic and is equally stable. Through Tecnar, the company they founded in 1998, they market their green alternative to plastic under the name of "Arboform" to customers all over the world. In 2009, under Pfitzer and Nägele's management, Tecnar produced some 275 tonnes of Arboform for applications such as furniture, loudspeakers, toys and car panelling.