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Press release

Futerra starts up its bioplastics demo unit (PLA) in Escanaffles, Belgium

Futerra, a 50/50 joint venture established in September 2007 by Galactic and Total Petrochemicals, announces the start up of its demo unit in Escanaffles, Belgium. The purpose of the unit is to test a state-of-the-art technology for the production of PolyLactic Acid (PLA) bioplastics of renewable vegetable origin, developed by the two partners.

This clean, innovative and competitive technology, based on a research and development program launched at the creation of the joint venture, entails two main phases. The first is the preparation of the monomer – the lactide – and its purification from lactic acid, as part of the fermentation of sugar from beet(*). The second is the polymerisation of the monomer to produce biodegradable plastic granules of vegetable origin.

The demo unit, which has a capacity of 1,500 tonnes per year, will be used to test and improve the successive steps in this process during an internal evaluation, which is expected to last around six months. By that time, Futerra will be able to offer a full range of products made from lactic acid, including lactide, oligomers and PLA polymers for the packaging market, especially food packaging, on the one hand, and sustainable applications, on the other.

(* Lactic acid can be extracted from other plants, including cane, maize (corn) and wheat. Renewable resources like biomass (forest waste) are also envisaged in the future.

More information: <http://www.futerra.com>

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Galactic, a biotech company, is one of the world leaders in lactic acid and lactates, with three production sites (Belgium, China, USA) and customers in more than 65 countries. Galactic has more than 15 years' experience in lactide and PLA technologies research. (www.lactic.com)

Total Petrochemicals, one of the world's leading petrochemicals company, produces base chemicals and their related polymers (polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene). Active in Europe, the United States, the Middle East and Asia, Total Petrochemicals services a large number of domestic and industrial markets, including packaging, construction and automotive. (www.totalpetrochemicals.com)

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