

Outstanding climate protection: Aurubis wins the Responsible Care Competition of the VCI

- » German Chemical Industry Association (VCI) recognizes innovative environmental and climate protection projects
- » Aurubis pilot project on the use of carbon-neutral hydrogen in copper production wins first prize
- » Aurubis on its way to becoming the most efficient and sustainable integrated smelter network worldwide
- » CEO Roland Harings: “Hydrogen is becoming increasingly important as a process gas. We’re testing how to implement this in practice”

Hamburg, September 3, 2021 – Aurubis AG has won this year’s Responsible Care Competition held by the German Chemical Industry Association (VCI). The association is therefore recognizing an innovative pilot project to decarbonize the copper process. Aurubis started the project at its Hamburg plant in May 2021. For the first time, the multimetal company is using carbon-neutral hydrogen as a reducing agent for copper in the anode furnace, replacing the natural gas currently used in the process without a loss of quality. Aurubis thus makes an important contribution to climate protection: while the use of natural gas forms carbon dioxide, the use of hydrogen only generates water vapor. This can help in achieving significant emission reductions – the reduction potential for the replacement of natural gas in the anode furnace at the Aurubis site in Hamburg alone amounts to 6,200 tons of CO₂ per year. Due to hydrogen’s chemical properties, Aurubis expects enhanced efficiency as well. “The use of hydrogen as a process gas in metal production isn’t a far-off prospect anymore,” explains Roland Harings, CEO of Aurubis AG. “We’re testing how to implement this in practice. Here and now.”

With the prize, the VCI’s expert jury is honoring Aurubis’ innovative approach and is convinced that the project will be groundbreaking in the copper and non-ferrous metals industry, not only in Europe. For 30 years, the Responsible Care Competition has awarded prizes to companies that voluntarily do more for environmental and climate protection, as well as occupational safety, than the law requires. This year, a total of 92 projects took part in the competition, whose theme is “Our contribution to climate protection.” Today, Aurubis received the top prize nationwide in a digital awards ceremony.

Pioneering work for industrial hydrogen use

In an extensive test series, Aurubis has been using carbon-neutral hydrogen on an industrial scale for copper anode production since May 27 and will carry on with the tests in continuous operation until fall 2021. The test series is receiving financial support from the city of Hamburg. In parallel, Aurubis is working together with 50 other partners – including universities and companies – on producing hydrogen from renewable energies in the joint industry project Living Lab Northern Germany. This project, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs, can help in achieving additional significant emission reductions in the future.

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“We are convinced that the use of hydrogen will take on a key role for successful climate protection, and not just in energy-intensive industries,” says Roland Harings, CEO of Aurubis AG. “As a multimetal company and one of the largest copper recyclers worldwide, we’ve been a forerunner in climate-friendly processes for a long time. We’re now proving this once again with our hydrogen pilot project in Hamburg. We’re pleased that the VCI is honoring our commitment and awarding us this distinction.”

Aurubis’ CO₂ footprint is already considerably lower than the industry average. According to current calculations, the existing processes that Aurubis employs already emit less than half of the CO₂ per ton of copper compared to the global average of all competitors. With the hydrogen pilot, Aurubis is now taking the next logical step. “Our work in this area is pioneering in the best sense of the word, so we’re pleased to have our efforts recognized by the VCI,” said Ulf Gehrckens, Senior Vice President Corporate Energy & Climate Affairs at Aurubis, during the awards ceremony. “We demonstrate concretely and in exemplary fashion how even energy-intensive industries can forge a path into an environmentally compatible future. That only works with hydrogen or direct electrification.”

Aurubis is committed to the goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2050 at the latest. Through the Science Based Targets initiative, the company has set ambitious science-based targets to reduce CO₂ emissions and translates this commitment into corresponding projects. These include the use of industrial heat, the power-to-steam procedure, and the use and purchase of solar and wind energy for sustainable electricity generation.

Aurubis - Metals for Progress

Aurubis AG is a leading global provider of non-ferrous metals and one of the largest copper recyclers worldwide. The company processes complex metal concentrates, scrap metals, organic and inorganic metal-bearing recycling materials, and industrial residues into metals of the highest quality. Aurubis produces more than 1 million tons of copper cathodes annually, and from them a variety of products such as wire rod, continuous cast shapes, profiles, and flat rolled products made of copper and copper alloys. Aurubis produces a number of other metals as well, including precious metals, selenium, lead, nickel, tin, and zinc. The portfolio also includes additional products such as sulfuric acid and iron silicate.

Sustainability is a fundamental part of the Aurubis strategy. “Aurubis responsibly transforms raw materials into value” – following this maxim, the company integrates sustainable conduct and business activities into the corporate culture. This involves a careful approach to natural resources, responsible social and ecological conduct in everyday business, and sensible, healthy growth.

Aurubis has about 7,200 employees, production sites in Europe and the US, and an extensive service and distribution system in Europe, Asia, and North America.

Aurubis shares are part of the Prime Standard Segment of the German Stock Exchange and are listed in the MDAX and the Global Challenges Index (GCX). Further information at www.aurubis.com