

Chemie-Technik GmbH – “A company needs to grow dynamically”

High-performance lubricants are used in a broad range of different industrial applications. Chemie-Technik GmbH supplies numerous industrial sectors around the world with lubricants, oils, greases and sprays. In the coming years, the company plans to focus increasingly on the use of renewable resources for the production of lubricants. The company always places a great deal of importance on producing high-quality products.



Lubricants are used in virtually all industrial sectors. They reduce friction and wear as well as being used for cooling and protection against corrosion. Lubricant oils and greases are mainly produced from mineral oil, which is a finite fossil fuel. Joachim Hof, Managing Director of Chemie-Technik GmbH based in Vöhringen (Baden-Württemberg), is well aware of the finiteness of mineral oil and has developed plans for investing in the research and development of lubricants manufactured from renewable resources.

The company "Süddeutsche Bardahl" was founded in 1956 and later became the cornerstone of Chemie-Technik GmbH. Since its establishment the family-run company has developed and sold products under the brand-name ELKALUB, which are high-performance lubricants for application in a broad range of industrial sectors. The product portfolio includes lubricants produced from different base oils with additives to improve performance. In addition, the company has long-standing experience and know-how in the production of lubricating grease. Nevertheless, Chemie-Technik GmbH produces special lubricants that are adapted to specific client requirements rather than large-volume mass products such as car engine oils. "As far as larger capacities are concerned, we are unable to compete with the lower prices charged by the big mineral oil companies," said Joachim Hof going on to add "our goal is to offer high quality products and consulting services for our clients' special applications."



Lubricants need to be cleared by the NSF

Chemie-Technik GmbH's lubricants are sold in Germany by the company's own sales representatives and in other countries by independent sales partners. In 2007, the company established a subsidiary (Elkalub Hefei) in China to oversee the sale of the company's products on the Chinese market. This company is thus able to supply the Chinese market with smaller product quantities. "The Chinese market is very important for us, which is why we decided to set up a subsidiary there," said Hof.

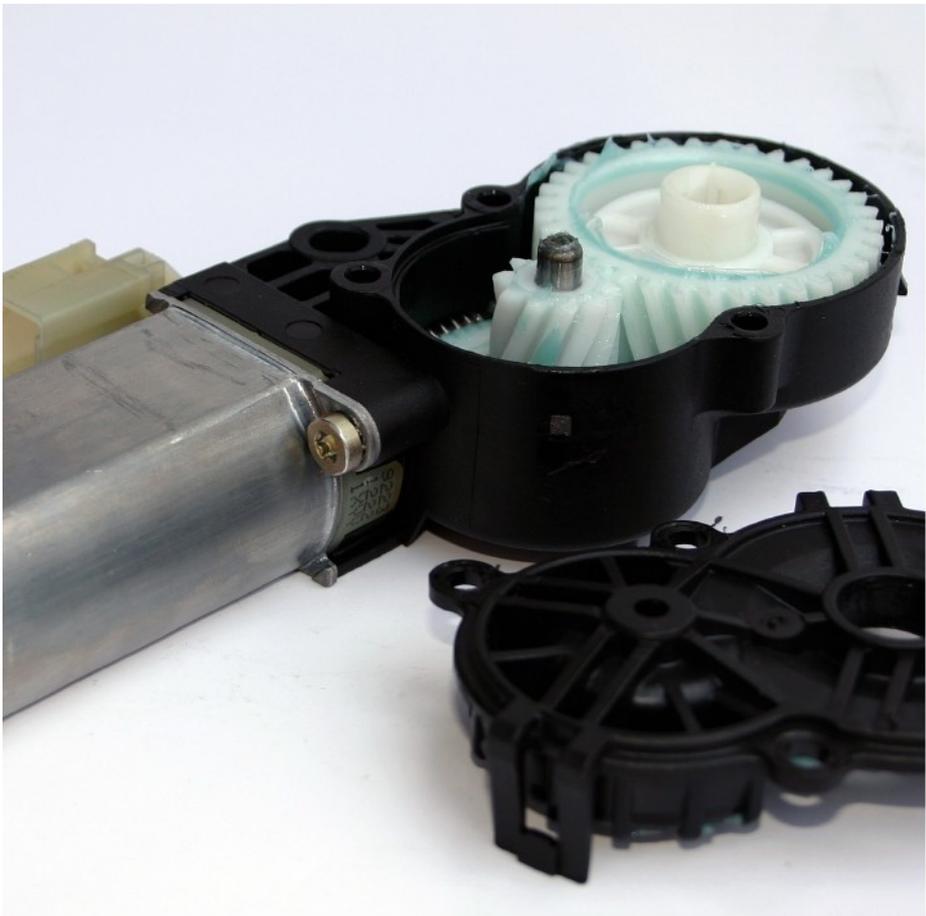
The company has 29 staff and annual revenues of around 7 million euros. On average, it has grown around 7% per year over the last 10 years. "A company needs to grow dynamically in order to remain healthy and be able to survive difficult years such as last year. Many German companies are increasingly focusing on the sale of so-called "private-label products". Chemie-Technik GmbH produces lubricants which are then sold by other companies under their own name. "In this area, the production of small quantities presents no problem for us," said the managing director. The company's product portfolio includes around 150 standard products and a large number of products used for specific applications.

The company also offers greases for the food industry. Food-grade lubricants need to comply with special requirements. "The lubricants are produced in such a way that they do not harm consumers if they come into contact with food," said Joachim Hof. These lubricants need to be granted H1-approval by the NSF (National Sanitation Foundation) and must only contain specific, approved raw materials. "The demand for such products has greatly increased over the last few years," said Hof, pointing out that H1 lubricants are also used by printing companies for labelling food packaging.

Lubricants based on renewable resources

Chemie-Technik GmbH's oils and greases are used in the automotive sector, for example for seat or steering wheel adjusters. "In the majority of cases, these adjusters involve plastics and steel parts with special requirements in terms of lubricants," explains Hof. The lubricating greases are suitable for use at temperatures ranging from -40 °C to +120 °C. The use of lubricating greases reduces the friction coefficients of the gears, meaning that the parts require less power and manufacturers can thus use smaller engines and produce lighter parts. ELKALUB lubricants are also used for gears in electrical tools.

Since the raw materials used to produce lubricants are finite, the company is very seriously considering the use of renewable resources. "The major issue is where to source the raw materials," said Hof explaining the company's plans to investigate which lubricants can be produced from renewable resources for use in industry. "Although we are only a small company, we nevertheless have to think about how things will be in twenty to fifty years' time," explains Hof. Biological lubricants have very high quality requirements, as they need to have the same characteristics as products made from fossil resources. "I believe that Germany is playing a pioneering role in this area," concluded Hof.



Lubricants of a variator (seat adjuster)
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