

Bioeconomy BW

Anniversary

15 years of BIOPRO: Pooling competencies – pushing innovations

This is the leitmotif of BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg GmbH, which was founded in 2003. 15 years is a good time to pause for a moment and take a look at BIOPRO's work and achievements. As a central point of contact and wholly-owned subsidiary of the Baden-Württemberg government whose main objective is to promote networking, BIOPRO knows only too well that progress is not made alone, but in collaboration with others. On November 21, 2018, an industry and network meeting was held in the StadtPalais in Stuttgart.

BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg was started in 2003 as an organisation to provide support to the biotech industry aimed at promoting stability in the difficult times when the dot.com bubble burst and led to the collapse of the German Nemax 50 stock index. Since its inception, BIOPRO has strongly focused on supporting and initiating innovation. BIOPRO started off focusing on medical technology and worked at the interfaces between biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry. As far as the healthcare sector is concerned, BIOPRO started to develop biotechnology as a key and innovative technology for the medical technology sector in 2006. In 2009, BIOPRO expanded its activities to cover environmental biotechnology/bioenergy and sustainability and in 2014 it also began working to help develop the bioeconomy in Baden-Württemberg. Since early 2018, BIOPRO has also been working on issues related to the health industry within the framework of the Baden-Württemberg Healthcare Location Forum.

Review and outlook

As BIOPRO's responsibilities grow, the number of collaborators and supporters from various industries also grows. Ministerial Director Michael Kleiner from the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Economics, Labour and Housing appreciates how much BIOPRO staff love the areas they work in: "But I also appreciate the breadth of issues that they deal with, the detailed overview that they have of the large number of special topics in science and research, industry and economics and all social and environmental issues," said the chairman of the BIOPRO supervisory board at the beginning of the evening event.

BIOPRO CEO Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater was asked where BIOPRO stands today and where he sees the state agency in a few years' time: "We are currently at a point that I would call BIOPRO's fifth quantum leap. The Baden-Württemberg Ministry of State has now entrusted us with accompanying an interministerial process of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Economics and Social Affairs involving health. The "Baden-Württemberg Healthcare Location Forum" project involves more than 100 players from the broad field of healthcare and aims to establish a completely new format for the development of state support for health. Additionally, in the field of bioeconomy, we have now been tasked with supporting a strategy process in which we, together with the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Rural Areas and Consumer Protection and the Baden-Württemberg Ministry for the Environment, Climate and the Energy Sector, provide support to draw up the Baden-Württemberg government's "Sustainable Bioeconomy for Baden-Württemberg" strategy and subsequently accompany the implementation of the strategy. This means that the core agenda for the next five years is clear, but, with input factors such as digitization, artificial intelligence, automation, miniaturization, climate protection, sustainability and regionalization, these issues will become more complex than ever before."

Synergies with BIOPRO

The participants in the subsequent panel discussion, Nadine Speidel (GlobalFlow GmbH), Dr. Christoph Schröder (Sciomics GmbH), Dr. Ing. Elmar Bourdon (Mannheim Medical Technology Cluster) and Ralf Kunert (WALA Heilmittel GmbH/naturamus) provided a personal point of view on the positive effects that cooperation with BIOPRO has for start-ups/companies and clusters. "Prof. Dr. Kindervater and his team always know someone who knows someone who might be a suitable partner for the next project," says Nadine Speidel, founder and CEO of GlobalFlow. BIOPRO supported Nadine Speidel in an early start-up phase in the "Young Innovators" competition. As part of another project with BIOPRO, she met her future investor.

In addition to assisting young companies in acquiring financial support, BIOPRO can also help them gain visibility. Sciomics benefited from this. The start-up was founded in 2012, and was able to present its services at the joint Baden-Württemberg booth at BIOTECHNICA, Europe's No. 1 international trade fair for biotechnology, in Hannover in 2013. The opportunity to participate as a speaker in thematically suitable events also increases a company's visibility in a purposeful way and facilitates the initiation of contacts with potential partners or customers.

The Mannheim Medical Technology Cluster is driving forward the efficient integration of medical technology companies, hospitals, research and education. Dr. Elmar Bourdon therefore particularly appreciates the proximity and close contacts that BIOPRO has with the ministries in the state capital, Stuttgart. Events in the Mannheim area and joint projects with BIOPRO, such as the "Industry-in-Clinic Platforms" strategy process, contribute to strengthening the visibility and reach of the medical technology cluster.

Ralf Kunert presented the synergies between BIOPRO and an established company, WALA Heilmittel GmbH, along with its subsidiary, naturamus, which was founded in 2014. As a raw materials supplier, naturamus has benefited from its exchanges with BIOPRO to find unusual partnerships that create completely new value chains and make the provision of raw materials more efficient. Kunert cited the stinging nettle as an example: naturamus is currently experiencing strong demand for nettle seed oil from the phytopharmaceutical and food industries. However, growing the nettle just for oil production is not usually economically viable as oil yields per unit area are low. Discussing the issue with Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater, naturamus found out about a textile producer in Baden-Württemberg who is very interested in nettle fibres for textile applications and also faces the same problem of area productivity. In a joint project initiated by BIOPRO, nettle cultivation and the integrated use of various plant components are now being tested in the Danube region. This is an excellent example of how the bioeconomy can help create more value by developing a network of actors from different sectors to enable more efficient processes through synergy effects.

The industry and network meeting on November 21, 2018 was a summing up of everything that has already been achieved. In a fast-paced world, BIOPRO's team continues to look to the future and continuing to work with its partners and players in the health and bioeconomy fields.

Impressions from the anniversary celebrations



Michael Kleiner, chairman of the BIOPRO supervisory board, being interviewed by Angelika Hensolt who chaired the evening event. © David Matthiessen Fotografie



Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater giving a welcome speech in the StadtPalais in Stuttgart © David Matthiessen Fotografie



Following the panel discussion, participants at the event engaged in networking in the StadtPalais in Stuttgart. © David Matthiessen Fotografie



Some of the BIOPRO team with Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater, CEO of BIOPRO © David Matthiessen Fotografie
