

The Straubing-Bogen "bioenergy region": distinguished in renewable energy

The district of Straubing-Bogen and the city of Straubing are distinguished in matters of renewable energy in the truest sense of the word; in 2009, the region was one of only 25 awardees from over 200 applicants to be designated a "bioenergy region" by the German Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection [*Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz*] as part of a competition. This distinction, which includes funding for development, is another great stimulus to be an initiator in this area and to advance the strength of innovation in bioenergy. Here, the district and the city of Straubing are also taking the function of role model for their citizens. Straubing-Bogen is positioning itself far beyond its borders - as a "region of renewable raw materials".

Committed and successful since 2001

This district has long been working successfully, in a committed way and with innovative ideas. As part of the process of Agenda 21, a volunteer task force formulated the objective of reducing energy consumption across the district and having the remaining energy needs increasingly satisfied by renewable, environmentally-friendly energy sources. The first citizens' solar array in the region is only one of the examples which were implemented in this context. Since then, those responsible have not rested on their laurels. They are directing their gaze further into the future with forward-looking projects which can be made reality - thanks to funding for development which this "bioenergy region" will receive as part of its distinction.

Numerous goals in their sights

One goal is to evaluate the flow of biomass materials in technical plant systems and to optimise these systems in order to strengthen the regional bioenergy value chain (NAWARO-OPTIMA). The model project Communal Bioenergy [*Kommunale Bioenergie*] falls under this heading. As part of this, at least one bioenergy project is to be assembled in every community within the



funding period. Additional emphasis has been placed on the systematic development of a leading centre for training, research and information, the "NAWARO-HOW". In this context, sanitation and heating engineers have been trained in renovating or installing heating systems based on bioenergy. A marketing position as "region of renewable raw materials" is also a cause being championed. The publicity campaign on bioenergy is part of this, as is the brand "Straubing - region of renewable raw materials".

Bioenergy network as an important union

To reach all of these goals, a package of measures was compiled from more than one dozen individual projects and the bioenergy network was founded. A multitude of regional partners from politics, commerce, science, agriculture, forestry, the media and the financial world have networked to become a strong alliance. The city of Straubing, too, as well as numerous district communities joined the project to support the implementation of the concept and to set off on the path to greater independence from fossil fuel sources - together.



Thriving surroundings support the network

The bioenergy network can support itself on active surroundings with strong partners. The competence centre for renewable raw materials belongs to these surroundings. The centre conducts research in, develops and promotes the fields of application for biomass and is based on three pillars which work closely together in three different directions: The Straubing Science Centre (WZ), the Centre for Technology and Promotion (TFZ) and C.A.R.M.E.N. e.V. Each of these three pillars has a specific assignment: the Science Centre is primarily concerned with basic research and instruction, the TFZ concentrates on applied research and consulting, and C.A.R.M.E.N. e.V. is dedicated to public relations and project assessment in particular. Presently, there are several professorship positions at the science centre, and since the 2008/2009 winter semester a masters programme in renewable raw materials has been offered. Additionally, in June 2009, the Fraunhofer project group BioCat was set up, which is concerned with catalytic processes for sustainable



provision of raw materials and energy on the basis of renewable raw materials. As a partner of the competence centre, the BioCampus GmbH offers space for entrepreneurial initiatives working in the area of renewable raw materials. In the prosperous industrial area of Straubing-Sand, in the immediate vicinity of the new business centre which offers office space to start-up entrepreneurs, one can find the BioCubator, which provides businesses in the industry with rental space for offices, laboratories, workshops or storage rooms. Also located here is the Danube harbour which is inseparably connected

with Straubing-Sand. The harbour has importance far beyond the region itself and stands for state-of-the-art harbour technology as well as flexible and customer-oriented industrial management on the waterway of the Rhein, Main, and Danube.

Additional focus on advising citizens

Innovative projects can be best implemented and new paths forged in active and lucrative surroundings such as these. To this end, advising citizens and strengthening the network on a local level are very important to the bioenergy network. For this reason, "energy scouts" have been designated for the communities and trained for their activities as advisors. Their role is to offer citizen-oriented contact points for all questions related to energy efficiency, energy conservation and renewable energy sources to the public at large and act as on-site contacts - all of which is volunteer work. Additionally, goals have already been reached of training many heating engineers, introducing an umbrella brand as a logo consisting of pictures and words, and commissioning an atlas of detailed information. The Straubing-Bogen bioenergy region has many further projects in mind, and numerous new ideas lined up, for the distinction they have received carries with it great obligations.

More information about the bioenergy region, network and projects is available online (in German) at www.bioenergie.straubing-bogen.de