

GREEN FILTERS FOR HEMP CIGARETTES

McAirlaid's, the binder free absorption material manufacturer, recently caught up with TJI to give an update on the reception of its **biodegradable Genia filter** since its launch the filter in 2018. The company also had some other big news: it will be embarking on its first commercial launch in a new segment— **hemp tobacco cigarettes**.

Sustainability has been a major issue for the tobacco industry for many years now. It has, however, become even more of a pressing issue in recent months. In late March 2019, the EU member states agreed on measures proposed by the EU Commission to tackle marine litter, which will directly impact filter innovation in coming years on the European market.

Conventional cigarette butts, which typically take 10 to 15 years to decompose, have been listed as one of the most commonly littered single-use items found on beaches across Europe.

There are more sustainable and environmentally-conscious options available on the market, but one of the biggest challenges for green filter manufacturers like McAirlaid's is getting this message out to consumers, according to Sales Director Katja Selle. "Marketing restrictions hamper us from communicating with consumers directly." Although this could, to some extent, help alleviate the cigarette waste problem. But on a positive note, Selle said, "Extensive media coverage is raising the overall awareness about the effects of plastics [on the environment now]."

The Genia filter is manufactured without glues or adhesives and is able to decompose within days or weeks in the ocean or at sea, according to the company.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

How has Genia been received since its launch in 2018? There have been several



McAirlaid's Genia filter

consumer panel tests and the feedback has been positive, the company told TJI. Creating an ecologically sound filter that offers a high quality smoking experience is not an easy task, as Selle explains, "When you change the filter material, it obviously does have a slight effect on the taste, but testpanellists have overwhelmingly reported having a positive smoking experience with our biodegradable filters. In comparison, conventional paper filters tend to be harsh and dry to smoke, which simply is not the case with the Genia filter."

And the process of developing and adapting the company's green filters for companies involves a lot of cooperation, the company says. "We provide a first round of test filters with the existing specifications for each potential client, and we go through a lot of developmental work jointly to achieve the ideal filter for an existing product."

The EU single-use plastic directive has increased commercial interest in the company's biodegradable filter. "At the moment, there are many tests going on globally to replace cellulose acetate filters and to launch new brands with the biodegradable Genia filter," Selle stated.

Currently, the company is working with both small and large cigarette manufacturers and producers of filtered cigarillos. Also, McAirlaid's has recently modified its Genia filter to be suitable for cannabis cigarettes. "At the moment, we have tests running in the US," Selle added.

In addition to that, the biodegradable filter manufacturer said that it would be embarking on its first commercial launch this summer with Koch & Gsell in Switzerland. "The company is well known for its Heimat brand which was the first hemp cigarette to be launched worldwide. Koch & Gsell is currently planning on replacing its entire range with Genia [filters]," Selle told TJI.

Hemp cigarettes consist of tobacco and smokable hemp flowers which contain cannabidiol (CBD). "We also expect a couple of other brand launches to happen later this year," Selle added.

How does the future look for McAirlaid's and the filter segment? "We see uptake of filters made with Genia accelerating in the coming months and years," Selle commented.

The company said that it also currently working on developing components for heat-not-burn (HNB) cigarettes. "Airlaid materials with additives may bring some interesting performance characteristics to this segment," Selle said.

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