



DOWNPASS STARS

RIBECO

On the way to climate neutrality



In Kaltenkirchen, a 30-minutes' drive from Hamburg, there is the headquarters of Richard Behr & Co. GmbH. Founded in 1917 and now managed by the fourth generation, the family-owned company is proud of its traditional Hanseatic approach of still offering customers and partners the "old-fashioned" personal service as the basis of a good working relationship. With great attention to detail, continuous innovation management and a willingness to change, Ribeco, a bedding supplier to major retail groups, has consistently moved towards climate neutrality since the 1980s. At the product level of the environmentally friendly bed, this goal has already been achieved.



Downpass talked to Christoph Habertag, managing director at Richard Behr & Co. GmbH.

As a family business, Richard Behr & Co. has been around since 1917, and today you are one of the European market leaders. Your vision is a climate-neutral, environmentally friendly bed that is manufactured according to the highest social standards. How do you put this vision into practice in your day-to-day business?

The climate-neutral bed has long since ceased to be a vision for us, but rather a concrete everyday reality: we avoid CO₂ wherever possible. What cannot be avoided in the supply chain, we can offset - and will do so

completely for our product range in our online shops from the end of this year.

Already in the 80's we started our production according to the latest standards, years ago we converted to our own combined heat and power plant; compressed air power generation, GreenLight program, green electricity for all our forklifts, the conversion of our company vehicles to electric drives, heat generation by means of solar thermal energy in our Chinese joint venture, or a solar-powered heat pump for our new distribution center, as well as climate-neutral delivery by electric runabout are only a few highlights that help us to avoid CO₂ on a daily basis. The next step to complete climate neutrality is not very far.



You work primarily for large retail partners - including discounters such as Aldi Nord and Aldi Süd, Norma, Netto or Jysk and the Otto Group as retail groups. How have purchasing agents' requirements in terms of sustainability and ecology changed in recent years, and what are you doing to meet them?



Christoph Habertag
Managing Director
Richard Behr & Co. GmbH

Our major partners are often pioneers of ecological trends before they become the focus of public discussion. As a supplier, we are at the forefront of many of these developments.

In most cases, we solve issues that smaller, local manufacturers are only confronted with years later. And sometimes we are even so far ahead that our proposals - for example, on sustainable packaging or climate-neutral products - are well received by our customers and partners, but then rejected by the purchasing department for economic reasons.

So far, however, none of our developments have been in vain: at some point, everyone will fall in line, and we will then have an advantage in the market.



Richard Behr's product portfolio includes many bedding products whose fillings are made from animal ingredients. What is your animal welfare policy and how closely do you work with animal welfare organizations on these issues?



It is our declared company policy to increase the proportion of vegan products. In our own online shops, we already register over 50% vegan products in terms of sales. In every segment, we strive for a completely sustainable

offering - from plastic-free alternatives where vegan materials are used; and with "closed loop" recycling and reuse where we still use synthetic materials.

For us, products with animal ingredients are animal welfare products, where the "five fundamental freedoms of animal welfare" are taken into account: Freedom from hunger or thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour, Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area, Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment, Freedom to express (most) normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind and Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Animal welfare organizations are our benchmark with their positive and negative lists, according to which we even exclude certain suppliers. And all products and raw materials are subject to our general guidelines, on the avoidance of chemical products and additives, on sustainability, and on social criteria.



How important are independent certifications for your success, and why do you rely on the DOWNPASS label as a sign of animal welfare & quality?

Our work is only successful if we can also communicate it to the final consumer. The attention span of the end user is getting shorter and shorter - with labels like DOWNPASS we can communicate a complex topic visually in a short and precise way.

DOWNPASS is therefore an elementary element for our animal welfare guideline, both for efficient external communication, but also for efficient measurability of the supply chains. Only with uniform standards industry structures and global supply chains can be aligned in the long term with where we all need to be: a climate-neutral bedding, sustainably and socially produced, committed to animal welfare. If our work with the DOWNPASS also provides other suppliers with structures that we can all align ourselves with, we will have achieved a great deal.

Source: Downpass e.V.