

Spotlight

VDI-MEG – Partnering for the future



**Prof. Dr.-Ing.
Peter Pickel** Photo: K. Geiger

The Max-Eyth-Gesellschaft Agrartechnik (MEG – Max Eyth Society for Agricultural Engineering) in the VDI understands itself as the community of interests of agricultural machinery engineers and scientists, whose research and development is essential with regard to mastering the global challenges of assuring sustainable food and energy supplies. In formal terms, the Max Eyth Society (MEG) is not itself a VDI Division, but instead a Department within the still young VDI Division “Technologies of Life Sciences” (TLS). The other TLS Departments are Bionics, Biotechnology, Biodiversity and Medical Technology. Consequently the TLS structure does not appear to follow a strictly logical pattern. Although the personal relationships between the representatives of the five TLS sectors are good, there is still potential for identifying, developing and using synergies within TLS. At the same time, the identity of our separate Max Eyth Society must be maintained. For the Society, the turn of the year was connected with the transition of the chairmanship from Professor Böttinger, who held our community together within the TLS and managed this with great thoughtfulness and success over the last six years, to me. My task will remain to lend the agricultural engineers in the VDI (Association of German Engineers) an influential voice through our networks together with our partners VDMA, KTBL, DLG, DBV, EurAgEng, MANUFUTURE etc., and to maintain the Max Eyth Society’s position as one of the supporting pillars of agricultural machinery research and development.

Not least via the VDI/EurAgEng Conference Agricultural Engineering (LAND.TECHNIK), the Max Eyth Society contributes substantially to our region in the heart of Europe enjoying such a high reputation worldwide in the field of agricultural machinery and equipment. Our goal must be to develop this conference further, to make it the agricultural machinery conference in a worldwide context. It appears that this will be possible within the environment of Agritechnica, thanks to partnerships with EurAgEng, VDI Wissensforum, and of course our essential cooperation with DLG (German Agricultural Society).

The development of our programme for practitioners – namely the „LAND.TECHNIK für Profis“ (conference for professionals) – is encouraging. Whereas this conference used to be our worry, the cooperation first with agricultural machinery manufacturers and most recently with DLG has brought about a genuine breakthrough. The demand for participation in the conference organised by this year’s industrial partner, Horsch in Schwandorf, exceeded the available capacities dramatically for the first time. This is both encouraging and of course regrettable, but above all gives us hope and sets us the task of developing this conference further for the future.

The political perception of agricultural machinery and equipment is now considerably stronger than it used to be. The increase in offers of research funding from the German Federal Ministries (especially the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Research, and Economics and Technology) to the agricultural machinery and equipment sector can be viewed as an indicator of this. At EU level too, with the start of the HORIZON 2020 funding programme, the number of invitations to apply for funding addressed to the agricultural machinery and equipment sector has developed encouraging dimensions. This is also attributable to the presence of VDI-MEG at appropriate points and to cooperation arrangements with the European technology platforms (MANUFUTURE) and ERA-nets (ICT-Agri). In the EU sector, the fly in the ointment is, however, an extremely low approval quota, partly well below 10 %, but in turn this leads to extremely high selection and hence to excellence.

Our most important organ is the journal LANDTECHNIK. Without support by KTBL, this magazine could not exist. VDI-MEG owes great thanks to the partner KTBL, which triggered and supported the initiative for changeover to an open access format. We are firmly convinced that this modern format essentially increases the visibility of the magazine and can thus fundamentally improve the reputation of agricultural engineering research. In future we must identify such opportunities more strongly and develop the courage to implement them innovatively and at the same time occasionally take a risk.

The further development of our partnerships – within and outside VDI – will help us to provide the agricultural machinery and equipment sector with an appropriate voice in research and politics.



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