

Hamburg-based scale-up traceless® nominated for the Deutscher Zukunftspreis 2025

Hamburg, September 17, 2025 – traceless materials GmbH has been nominated for the Deutscher Zukunftspreis 2025. With its innovative material, the Hamburg-based company is proving that it cannot only replace plastics on a large scale, but also lay the foundation for a new, sustainable industry.

The combination of technological progress and social benefit is at the heart of the Deutscher Zukunftspreis, one of Germany's most prestigious science and innovation awards. It honours projects that combine scientific excellence with clearly recognizable benefits for society, the environment, and the economy. In doing so, they help shape the future of Germany as a business location, unlock economic potential and create new jobs. The award ceremony will take place on November 19, 2025, in Berlin and will be broadcast by ZDF starting at 10:15 p.m.

FROM START-UP TO SCALE-UP

Since its founding in 2020, traceless® has grown from a research team to a 100-person scale-up, preparing to bring its material to market at scale. With commercial market entry planned for later this year, the company is set to deliver several thousand tons of material annually, meeting the growing demand for sustainable materials across Europe. traceless® cooperates with partners such as Mondi and OTTO and has already received numerous awards.

„The nomination for the Deutscher Zukunftspreis is a great honour for us – and at the same time a confirmation that we are on the right track with our work,” says Dr.-Ing. Anne Lamp, CEO & Co-Founder of traceless®. „With traceless®, we are showing that high-tech and nature can go hand in hand — and that sustainable innovation is scalable and economically viable. Our goal is to replace plastics on a large scale without sacrificing convenience or functionality, and in doing so make a real contribution to solving global plastic pollution.”

INNOVATION AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION

Worldwide, only nine percent of plastics are recycled. Around a quarter of plastic waste enters the environment, where it fragments into microplastics that persist and are now detectable in ecosystems and in the human body. This is because plastics - and also bioplastics - are based on synthetic polymers that do not occur in nature. Microorganisms lack the enzymes to break them down, so they cannot biodegrade and instead remain in the environment as microplastics.

Nature itself, however, has long relied on polymers: plants, animals and microorganisms use natural polymers such as starch, cellulose, or proteins. These structures can be broken down by microorganisms and returned to the natural cycle. Yet in their raw form, natural polymers are brittle, water-soluble, and lack thermoplastic properties -and are therefore unsuitable as technical materials, which need to be meltable and malleable like plastics.

traceless® set out to bridge this gap by combining the logic of nature with the technical requirements of industry. With its patented process, the company extracts natural polymers from agricultural residues and functionalizes and granulates them. In this way, the natural structures are arranged to acquire thermoplastic properties - making traceless® the first to bring plastic-free thermoplastics to the market. The process is resource-efficient and low-energy, saving up to 90% of CO₂ emissions compared to the production and disposal of conventional plastics.

The resulting granulates, traceless® materials, are biobased, plastic-free, and home-compostable. They can be processed on standard converting machines - as coatings on paper, through injection moulding into rigid parts, or by extrusion into films. The end products combine the functional properties of plastics - grease and water repellence, barrier functions, heat-sealability, and adhesion to paper - while avoiding their drawbacks. They are particularly suited for applications that are difficult to recycle, reuse, or are prone to ending up in the environment.

With this nomination, traceless® joins a list of groundbreaking German innovations. It demonstrates that sustainable materials are not just a vision, but a realistic, scalable solution for industry – “made in Germany.”

ABOUT TRACELESS MATERIALS GMBH

The bioeconomy scale-up traceless materials GmbH produces the natural biomaterial traceless® from agricultural industry residues, making it one of the pioneers in the field of innovative natural polymer materials. The team led by co-founder & CEO Dr. Anne Lamp, COO Sina Spingler, and CFO Jakob Röskamp aims to contribute to the development of a climate-friendly and circular bio-based industry by rapidly scaling up the resource-saving process to industrial level. traceless® cooperates with leading global brands and processors such as paper and packaging manufacturer Mondi and e-commerce company OTTO. Pilot products from traceless® have been successfully tested on the market since 2022. The company has already received numerous awards, including the German Start-up Award and the German Sustainability Award.