



# Press Release

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## **BARK CLOTH®\_Europe and BARKTEX®\_organic material is honored by NASA and Associates**

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- **BARK CLOTH®\_Europe is a winner of the LAUNCH: Systems Challenge 2013**
- **BARKTEX® biocomposite material, which is made from regrowable tree bark, is distinguished as one of the Top 10 innovative materials worldwide**
- **Ecologically efficient and socially sustainable production methods**

Pasadena/Ebringen, 30. October 2013 – Based in the southern Black Forest town of Ebringen, the company BARK CLOTH®\_Europe is one of the 10 winners of the LAUNCH: Systems Challenge 2013 ([www.launch.org](http://www.launch.org)). The worldwide competition, which was sponsored by NASA, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. State Department and NIKE, offers a platform to innovations, which have the potential to lead all sectors worldwide in sustainable systems, equitable economic growth, promoting the prosperity and renewing the earth's resources. The jury awarded both the company BARK CLOTH® and its biocomposite material BARKTEX® ([www.barktexas.com](http://www.barktexas.com)), an economically, ecologically and socially sustainably produced fiber material at the interface between wood and textiles, which is derived from rapidly regrowable bark.

BARK CLOTH®\_Europe has succeeded in developing - BARKTEX® Textile and Composites – functional, organic and sustainably produced materials from the ancient material of bark fleece with virtually unlimited application possibilities. Whether it is the three-dimensional plasticity, abrasion resistance, acoustic qualities or fire and water repellency properties – this product is as diverse as the



[www.barktexas.com](http://www.barktexas.com)



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finishing options and material combinations as well as the areas of application. BARKTEX® fiber composite materials have already been incorporated into a wide variety of products such as wall coverings, furniture, clothing, footwear and sports equipment or cell phone covers and car consoles.

## **Economically, Ecologically and Socially Sustainably Produced Biomaterials**

The company received the NASA award not only for the biomaterial itself, but also for its entire value-added supply chain. This year's LAUNCH: Systems Challenge awarded the top 10 material and process innovations from around the world that have the potential to contribute to defining entirely new economic systems. BARKTEX® bio-composites are produced with low energy and water consumption, a neutral and sometimes even positive CO<sub>2</sub> balance and a dematerialized, decentralized process in culturally, socio-economically and ecologically sustainable production structures. "Contrary to prevailing structures in the global textile industry with their enormous problems, the team of BARK CLOTH® is based on an innovative model for micro-enterprises, which strengthens the women in particular and ensures the food supply of smallholder families in structurally weak and vulnerable regions," says Beth Beck of NASA. She adds, "The pioneers of BARK CLOTH®, Oliver Heintz and Mary Barongo, have managed to transform traditional production processes into modern, scalable structures for the production of commercial products. Thus, utilizing ancient techniques and materials the people in Africa experience a new raison d'être."

## **Multifaceted Research Activities for Wider Applications**

In cooperation with scientific institutions, universities and industry BARK CLOTH®\_Europe is continuously working on new material creations. Tests of the German Aerospace Center (DLR) demonstrated, for example, exceptionally favorable bending elasticity and impact strength of BARKTEX®. As a partner in the international and interdisciplinary knowledge network of BASF further research is currently focused on developing BARKTEX® as a substitute for leather and oil-based materials.

"After numerous material-based prizes, the award by NASA brings with it worldwide attention also to our manufacturing process. Our goal is to further contacts with industry and academia in order to expand the potential of BARKTEX® through new techniques, processes or product characteristics for an even broader market, without compromising the ecological, cultural and socio-economic structures," reports





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BARK CLOTH® founder Oliver Heintz. "The focus of the applications are in the fields of wood, textile, leather and plastic, but applications in the medical sector are also conceivable."

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**Characters:** 4,323 incl. Blanks

## **Background:**

### **Innovative biocomposites from renewable tree-bark**

Textile-like non-woven materials from trees are the most ancient material with thousands of years of old history. To produce the so-called Bark Cloths, tree-bark is peeled off and then pounded by manual processing to a flat cloth. If the bark is harvested, it grows within one year again, a tree does not have to be felled.

The production of textiles and composites is based on BARKTEX® BARK CLOTH®, a tree bark cloth, which is obtained from the bark of the Ugandan fig tree. The mutuba-fig tree is grown exclusively on smallholder farms with mixed cropping. It thereby does not compete with food production, but rather promotes the yield of other cultivated crops as a deep rooter. The harvest and mechanical processing of ever renewable natural product is done entirely by hand, without any textile auxiliaries or additives. In 2008, Ugandan bark cloth production was included on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.

The different processing techniques and equipment of bark cloth with a variety of functionalities create a wide range of BARKTEX® textiles and composites. In addition to aesthetic aspects such as a leather-like appearance, different colors and designs, BARKTEX® is also available equipped with for example a fire- or water-repellent effect, optimized abrasion behavior, increased tensile strength, breathability or acoustic qualities.



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Numerous awards such as the iF Material Design Award (2005), the MATERIALICA Design + Technology Award (2008) and several nominations for official Design Awards of the Federal Government prove the innovation and sustainability potential of the bio-composite material.

The production of BARKTEX® takes place with an extremely low energy and water consumption, produces a neutral and partly even positive CO<sub>2</sub> balance and represents a dematerialized, decentralized process in cultural, social-economically and environmentally acceptable production structures. That is, the agroforest textiles are manufactured with low-tech intelligence directly at the place of extraction of raw materials in Uganda. An ever increasing vertical integration in the production of semi-finished products allows high added value locally, thereby creating income for many people in a structurally weak region.

## **About LAUNCH**

Under the motto "Collective Genius For a Better World" the initiative LAUNCH was created in 2010 by the NASA, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US State Department and NIKE. The aim is to promote innovative ideas and trends worldwide, that contribute to a sustainable future and accelerate solutions that will help to solve the burning issues of our society.

LAUNCH searches for visionaries in form of various competitions in the categories BEYOND WASTE, HEALTH, ENERGY, WATER and SYSTEMS, whose ideas, technologies or concepts could significantly improve our world. Launch gives them a platform, creates publicity and entirely new networks in order to solve the most challenging sustainability issues in our society.

More information about the LAUNCH initiative:

<http://www.launch.org/>

More information about LAUNCH: Systems Challenge Competition 2013:

[http://www.launch.org/sites/default/files/LAUNCH\\_Systems\\_Challenge\\_2013\\_Challenge\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.launch.org/sites/default/files/LAUNCH_Systems_Challenge_2013_Challenge_Statement.pdf)





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## Graphical material:

- **prba\_1301\_1:** Gear knob covering with BARKTEX<sup>®</sup>, e.g. Low-friction 0577, a polymer-strengthened Bark Cloth<sup>®</sup> with optimized abrasion properties of upto 60,000 abrasion cycles
- **prba\_1301\_2:** Detail: Three dimensional structure of BARKTEX<sup>®</sup>
- **prba\_1301\_3:** Wall covering with BARKTEX<sup>®</sup>, e.g. MilkyWay 0801, fire-resistant
- **prba\_1301\_4:** Continuous materials research always opens up new functionalities and applications
- **prba\_1301\_5:** Bark Cloth in the fire shaft test
- **prba\_1301\_6:** LAUNCH – an initiative of NASA, NIKE, der U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. State Department promotes materials and systems innovation for a sustainable future ([www.launch.org](http://www.launch.org))

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The Ugandan-German joint venture BARK CLOTH®\_Uganda Ltd. / BARK CLOTH®\_Europe is a pioneer in the field of systematic bark cloth production. Founded in 1999, the company consistently develops and produces economically, environmentally and socially sustainable fiber materials from the always renewable bark of trees. What began as a development project secures hundreds of small-scale peasant families in Uganda and the rainforest regions of Honduras and Brazil an income today. The main product is the biocomposite BARKTEX® which is used in various sectors in industry and crafts due to its exceptional material properties. The company undertakes numerous research kooperations with scientific institutions, universities and industrial companies to develop new material creations for diverse applications, to combine knowledge about the production of tree-products such as bark, fruit stand covers, latex or nutshells in Africa, Latin America and the South Pacific, and to open up new application possibilities.

Among the company's customers are renowned companies such as Daimler, VW, BMW, Siemens, Alcan KAPA, Puma, Converse, Völkl Sports, Anker carpeting, Marburger Wallpapers, Rolf Benz, Leo Burnett or Paramount Studios. But also many local craft shops, designer stores and chain stores from the upscale consumer segment rely on the innovative biomaterial. For more information visit [www.barktexas.com](http://www.barktexas.com).