



Press Release

## Green Buildings with Eco-Friendly Foams

Materials Scientist Marie-Pierre Laborie Receives Distinction  
“German High Tech Champion”

Developing hard foams from bark extract to serve as insulating material for homes: That is the goal of the project “Biofoambark,” initiated by Prof. Dr. **Marie-Pierre Laborie** from the Faculty of Forest and Environmental Sciences of the University of Freiburg in February 2012. The Fraunhofer Association has now selected her research for the distinction “German High Tech Champion” in the category “Green Buildings.” She will receive a tandem prize worth 15,000 euros together with her colleagues Prof. Dr. **Antonio Pizzi** and Prof. Dr. **Alain Celzard** from the French Université de Lorraine. The prize will be awarded at POLLUTEC 2012, an international trade fair for environmental equipment, technology, and services to be held from 27 to 30 November 2012 in Lyon, France.

Laborie and her research team produce the hard foams out of tannin, a compound found in tree bark that is typically left over as a waste product in the lumber industry. Since the foams have good insulating and flame resistant properties, they will be used predominantly as insulating material for buildings and molded automobile parts. In addition, they could one day be used as catalysts or filters for heavy metals and as a replacement for packaging materials like styrofoam. They will even be useful after the products themselves are worn out: A further goal of the project is to convert the foams into biofuel. “We want to relieve the burden on the environment by increasing the usefulness of wood and offering a marketable alternative to petroleum-based foams,” says Laborie.

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Freiburg, 25.10.2012

The project “Biofoambark” is being supported by the Agency for Renewable Resources with funds from the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection. Besides the University of Freiburg, the institutions collaborating on the project include the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems in Freiburg and scientific and industrial partners in Italy, Spain, Finland, Slovenia, and France.

The aim of the Fraunhofer Association campaign “German High Tech Champions” is to help inventors at German universities and independent research institutes to increase their success in contract research on the international stage. It is part of an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for enhancing the international standing of Germany as a center for innovation and research.

**Further Information:**

[www.biofoambark.uni-freiburg.de/News/Biofoambark](http://www.biofoambark.uni-freiburg.de/News/Biofoambark)

Gefördert durch:



Bundesministerium für  
Ernährung, Landwirtschaft  
und Verbraucherschutz

aufgrund eines Beschlusses  
des Deutschen Bundestages



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The University of Freiburg achieves top positions in all university rankings. Its research, teaching, and continuing education have received prestigious awards in nationwide competitions. Over 22,000 students from 100 nations are enrolled in 186 degree programs. Around 5,000 teachers and administrative employees put in their effort every day – and experience that family friendliness, equal opportunity, and environmental protection are more than just empty phrases here.