



PRESS RELEASE

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Berner Group doubles growth in 2018/2019 to approx. 5 percent and attains new all-time sales record

- Sales revenues rise to approx. 1.07 billion euros
- Strongest growth since 2011/2012
- Berner Group has been growing for five years

The Berner Group closed the 2018/2019 business year with a new sales record. This was announced today by the Künzelsau-based B2B trading company at the official presentation of the balance sheet for the last financial year. Adjusted for consolidation effects, year-on-year sales doubled to 4.8% (previous year 2.4%), the highest figure in seven years. Overall, the Berner Group achieved sales revenues of approximately 1.07 billion euros in its Omnichannel Trading and Specialty Chemicals divisions. The family business thereby continues its growth trend. By selling products and services to professionals in the industrial, construction, mobility and specialty chemicals sectors throughout Europe, the Berner Group has already achieved growth for the fifth time in succession.

“As is generally known, records are a source of pride and make one hungry for more. Our courage six years ago to push through radical digitization, our ambition to consistently optimize and harmonize all business processes and our candor in going down new paths have all paid off,” said Christian Berner, CEO of the Berner Group.

He made it clear that the Berner Group will continue to invest heavily in the Group’s sustainable growth during the current financial year. To achieve intraday delivery of products to customers, the first step will involve investing 40 million euros for the construction of new central warehouses on the German-Dutch border in Kerkrade, in Austria and at the German locations in Künzelsau and Ingelfingen.

In Duisburg, where Caramba is based, the Berner Group is building a modern campus for around 6 million euros. The focus is on research and development for specialty chemicals. The number of employees at the location will increase significantly in the medium term.

Revenue in the Omnichannel Trading division grows by 5.7%

Sales revenues generated by Omnichannel Trading (multi-channel sales with the Berner and BTI brands) rose by 5.7% to approximately 930 million euros in the year under review.

The Berner brand recorded disproportionately high growth of more than 6%. All five European regions contributed positively to the overall growth. At about 10%, the strongest year-on-year increase was recorded in the region East. In the largest sales region, South, Berner’s national subsidiaries once again boosted sales by more than 7%. The region Central, which also includes Germany, achieved a sales increase of 3% and was also above the previous year’s level.

The field sales force and e-commerce sales channels contributed disproportionately to this growth. The number of employees advising customers on visits and offering products and services rose once again by around 1% over the year to more than 5,300 men and women. The e-commerce share of total sales increased by approximately 13%.



“The Berner brand not only topped the figures from last year, but also the budget targets. In my opinion, in addition to a higher number of sales employees and higher sales productivity, the reasons here include the acquisition of well-known major customers, as well as the increasing number of innovative services and products offered exclusively by Berner,” said Carsten Rumpf, COO in the Executive Board responsible for Omnichannel Trading.

Such innovations include the BeraBox2go/OBTI Case, which allows Berner and BTI to deliver merchandise to customers directly at the construction site virtually around the clock. Another is the “Internet of Things” tracking service, which enables companies to see where their equipment and tools are at any given time. In addition, customer-friendly ordering apps and new chemical products are being exclusively offered on the market.

BTI, which supplies professional customers in the construction sector, was forced to make adjustments for the increasingly significant shortage of skilled workers in this sector. With a sales team that was reduced by about 25 sales representatives, BTI was still able to increase its team productivity by more than 6%. The e-commerce and call center sales channels also recorded double-digit growth compared to the previous year. As a result, BTI is one of the Berner Group subsidiaries that led in profitable growth in 2018/2019.

“BTI has resisted the temptation of buying more turnover in response to market challenges. Instead, the company concentrated on its strengths, thereby significantly improving its profit contribution,” said Carsten Rumpf.

Caramba Group asserts itself

The German Chemical Industry Association (VCI) reported declines in sales and selling prices for the specialty chemicals sector in 2018 and expects the weak demand to continue this year. The Caramba Group was nevertheless able to maintain its position as one of the leading B2B manufacturers in specialty chemicals for cleaning processes, surface modification and surface protection in this difficult market environment.

At around 137 million euros, sales reached last year’s level. The Caramba Group companies were able to successfully offset declines, for example in the licensed production segment, with growth in retail and wash. “The Caramba Group business model has shown that it is robust even in difficult times. Caramba maintained its sales levels and made a profitable contribution to earnings. Even though chemical association forecasts remain unchanged for this year, we are striving for growth. The sales we see as a result of launching new products and product lines in commercial vehicle washing and industrial parts cleaning, among other areas, have made us fundamentally optimistic,” said Christoph Möltgen, responsible for the Caramba Group on the Executive Board.

Dynamic growth continues

The Berner Group continued the previous year’s dynamic growth during the first two months of the 2019/20 financial year. Despite an economic slowdown in several European regions, May 2019 was the strongest May since the company was founded.

The Berner Group

The Berner Group is a family-run European commercial enterprise. Our vision is: “We keep the world together and moving.” This means we are the central B2B trading partner for all materials in the maintenance, repair, and production segments for our customers in the building, mobility, and industry sectors. With more than four channels we create an integrated omni-channel purchasing experience for our customers. In the steel and C materials as well as chemicals segments we are also an innovative manufacturer. We are represented in over 25 countries for our customers with more than 200,000 items and 8,200 employees.