**Hans-Joachim Boekstegers Sponsorship Prize**

**MULTIVAC awards the prize to a microplastics researcher
Wolfertschwenden, 28 June 2022 - Microplastics in food: The spectre that haunts the media. But what is the truth about fears, that particles from plastic packs could contaminate food? Luisa Kristina Murer, a student at the Technical University of Munich (TUM), has addressed these questions in her work for her Masters degree. She has been awarded the Hans-Joachim Boekstegers Prize 2022 by MULTIVAC for her commitment to safe food.**

Whether salami, cheese or minced meat, it is inconceivable that food can dispense with plastic packs in everyday life. With good reason. Packs protect products against contamination and extend the shelf life through modified atmosphere - they also reduce the quantity of food waste and improve the CO2 balance of the food sector. And today the packs themselves consist to an ever growing degree of recycled plastic material. All good then on balance? Yes and No. Speculation continues to circulate in the media, that microscopically small plastic particles from packs can transfer to food and get into the human body. Conjecture that is hardly substantiated scientifically - but there is unfortunately little or no data and knowledge about the role of the manufacturing process in the production of packs.

**Luisa Kristina Murer is developing a new method of determining the number of microplastic particles**

In her work for her Masters degree, Luisa Kristina Murer, who is studying "Technology and Biotechnology in Food" at the TUM, is approaching the speculation about residual microplastics in food from a scientific perspective. The thesis observes in concrete terms the factors, which influence the potential occurrence of microplastics during the manufacture of food packs made from plastic films. The work of the TUM student has developed a standardised method, by which the number of microplastic particles in different plastic films can be determined. By using standardised food models, she has also pursued the question of whether these microplastics can transfer to food.

“It was important personally for me to handle this sensitive topic in a neutral way, since the subject is often misunderstood and falsely represented in the media,” says Luisa Kristina Murer. “My work for example includes not only absolute figures, but also comparable values with natural particles, so that the quantities of microplastics are put in context.” But further research work is necessary, in order to increase the statistical relevance, and also be able to make reliable statements about the significance of plastic particles. The work has however already produced the following findings: The manufacturing process of plastic packs does influence the number of microplastic particles.

“**One of my greatest aims in life is to leave the world in a slightly better state**"

The jury for the Hans-Joachim Boekstegers Sponsorship Prize was very enthusiastic about the research work by Luisa Kristina Murer. Professors at the TU Munich and the TU Dresden, as well as representatives from MULTIVAC, were all of one mind: Luisa Kristina Murer's thesis was the best of all the Masters and degree work in the area of packaging technology, and which was also relevant to industrial-scale food processing, and her thesis therefore won the day against the other submissions from students at the Technical Universities of Munich and Dresden, as well as those from the Fraunhofer Institute for Process Technology and Packaging (IVV) at the Freising and Dresden sites. The panel therefore awarded the sponsorship prize and the sum of 1,000 euros to Luisa Kristina Murer.

“I feel very honoured to receive the sponsorship prize,” says Luisa Kristina Murer, for whom it is much more than just about herself. “In my opinion, the subject of microplastics is very topical today. It means a lot to me, that this subject has been put under the spotlight thanks to the Hans-Joachim Boekstegers Sponsorship Prize. That shows me that innovations, which are relevant to the environment, are of great importance.” Luisa Kristina Murer now feels even more motivated to start a professional career in research and development. And to tackle subjects, about which nobody has yet thought. “It sounds a bit melodramatic. But one of my greatest aims in life is to leave the world in a slightly better state.”

About Hans-Joachim Boekstegers

Hans-Joachim Boekstegers started working at MULTIVAC on 1st April 2002 as the first Group President, who was not a family member. He significantly advanced the successful development of the company right up until his retirement in January 2020. He developed an international corporate group with a global network of sales and service subsidiaries out of a medium-sized machine manufacturer. He was always an advocate for investing in training and further education, and he supported cooperative partnerships with universities. MULTIVAC acknowledges his commitment to promoting young talent with the Hans-Joachim Boekstegers Sponsorship Prize.

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**About MULTIVAC**

MULTIVAC is one of the leading providers worldwide of packaging solutions for food products of all types, life science and healthcare products as well as industrial items. The MULTIVAC portfolio covers virtually all requirements of processors and producers in terms of pack design, output and resource efficiency. It comprises a wide range of packaging technologies as well as automation solutions, labellers and quality control systems. The product range is rounded off with solutions upstream of the packaging process in the areas of portioning and processing, as well as bakery technology. Thanks to the company's extensive expertise in packaging lines, all modules can be integrated into complete solutions. This means that MULTIVAC solutions guarantee a high level of operational and process reliability as well as efficiency. The MULTIVAC Group has approximately 6,900 employees worldwide, with about 2,400 based at its headquarters in Wolfertschwenden. With over 80 subsidiaries, the company is represented on all continents. More than 1,000 sales advisors and service technicians throughout the world use their know-how and experience to the benefit of customers, and they ensure that all installed MULTIVAC machines are utilised to their maximum. Further information can be found at: [www.multivac.com](http://www.multivac.com).

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