

Society News

Professor Jürgen O. Metzger celebrates his 65th birthday

Professor Dr. Jürgen O. Metzger will celebrate his 65th birthday on November 9, 2005.

Jürgen O. Metzger joined the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany, more than thirty years ago. He is now serving as Full Professor of Organic Chemistry. His main research activities concern sustainability in chemistry, renewable raw materials, radical chemistry, and mass spectrometry. His special interest is focused on environmentally benign organic syntheses of sustainable products using oils and fats as renewable chemical feedstocks.

After studying chemistry in Tübingen, Erlangen, Berlin and Hamburg, he prepared his Ph.D. thesis, entitled "On the reduction of transition metal halides by aluminium alkyls", between 1967 and 1970 with Prof. Dr. H. Sinn at the University of Hamburg. In 1970, Jürgen Metzger joined the University of Bremen as research assistant. There, his scientific work was accompanied by founding activities surrounding the new university and developing the department of chemistry. His organizational experience was highly valued at the newly founded University of Oldenburg which he joined in 1974 as assistant professor. He completed his 'habilitation' in Organic Chemistry in 1983 on "Thermally initiated radical reactions at high temperatures and high pressures". In 1991 the University of Oldenburg appointed him Professor of Organic Chemistry. From 1995 to 1998 he was dean of the department of chemistry.

Already the very beginning of Professor Metzger's scientific career was characterized by issues concerning sustainability in chemistry. In 1981, he was awarded the Océ van der Grinten Prize for promoting science in the field of environment and development policies. Especially his studies on reactions in supercritical fluids at high temperature and high pressure as well as those concerning extractions with supercritical organic solvents contributed to the award. In the field of mass spectrometry, he is engaged in the analysis of biopolymers such as polysaccharides and lignin derivatives. By investigating reactive intermediates in chemical reactions in solution with electrospray ionization mass spectrometry, a most important and innovative method for the elucidation of

organic reaction mechanisms, he became a leading and internationally recognized expert in this area.

Plenty of publications in renowned journals, numerous editorials and book chapters as well as his activity in various professional organizations including the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker (GDCh; German Chemical Society), the American Oil Chemists' Society (AOCS), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Massenspektrometrie (German Society for Mass Spectrometry) attest to his scientific productivity.

Since the late 1980s, Professor Metzger has been engaged in the chemistry of oils and fats as renewable feedstocks. In 1994, he was awarded the August Claas Research Prize for his investigations in the field of renewable raw materials. Most of his forward-looking studies concerning addition reactions to the C,C-double bond of unsaturated fatty compounds were carried out within the framework of a research project involving five German research groups highly experienced in this area and supported by the Ministry of Agriculture for more than ten years. His lasting great interest in the chemistry of plant oils and fats and renewable feedstocks in general is complemented by his comprehensive understanding of sustainable development. Pleading for "Green Chemistry", he states that "in the long time, renewables are the only workable solution and their processing by catalytic or other methods will make it possible to replace oil as civilization's basic feedstock".

The key aspects of Professor Metzger's activities can be described as "sustainable, renewable, green" – this being the title of an editorial article (Nachrichten aus der Chemie, GDCh, June 2005). In this editorial, he points out the importance of renewable feedstocks, the implementation of the objectives of Agenda 21 and the development of sustainable synthetic processes in chemistry as well as the inclusion of Green Chemistry concepts, which relate to more than only renewable feedstocks, in new bachelor and master degree curricula in order to prepare students for the challenges of the future.

All of us, friends and colleagues, congratulate Professor Metzger on his 65th birthday – and wish him all the best for the coming years and hope that his scientific work will continue for a long time.

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