

Specialists for beautiful skin

KOKO develops, produces and sells high end skin care products

The skin care market is big and the variety of products is immense. Some products are available in drugstores for a few cents only while others are sold via teleshopping channels or only available in pharmacies. Consumers are faced with questions like 'What cream is appropriate for my skin?' or 'Which of these products is worth its salt?' 'Cosmetic preparations are a matter of confidence', says Dr. Lautenschläger. Only in very rare cases, consumers know what ingredients are contained in a product and even less consumers are familiar with the effects of the different ingredients. It's a fact however that not every manufacturer deserves the confidence of customers.

It's a different story with KOKO Kosmetikvertrieb GmbH & Co. KG, established in 1994 at Freiburg and since 2000 based at Leichlingen. In 1998, Dr. Hans Lautenschläger had become co-partner and since 2014 he has been sole shareholder. In all these years KOKO has changed from a distribution company into an independent all-rounder: During the years 2009 and 2012 the first pilot production facility was followed by the construction of a clean room of 350 m² and of filling and packing facilities. Today, KOKO develops, produces and distributes skin care preparations under the brand name "dermaviduals[®]". 'The number of people with problem skin is on the increase', says Mr. Lautenschläger. 'They need professional, dermatologically oriented advice, but principally a skin care concept that is adapted to their individual skin condition'. Well, the individual skin condition just cannot be found out at drugstore shelves. This is the reason why home care preparations made in Leichlingen only are available in dermatological practices with associated cosmetic departments or via cosmetic institutes and authorized pharmacies. "dermaviduals[®]" preparations are free of emulsifiers, preservatives, perfumes, mineral oils, silicones, dyes and amines. Instead, they are based on the so-called principle of corneotherapy which means that the skin care preparations consist of active agents that are closely related to the natural components and the texture of the skin in order to support respectively restore the natural homeostasis and the protective barrier functions of the skin. 'We have domestic and foreign clinical practice studies on the preparations', emphasizes the managing director.

Over the years, the product range has been continuously increasing: starting from A such as alga based mask via E such as eye cream to Z such as zinc liposome serum. About 100 different creams, gels, lotions, masks and tonics already belong to the product range. There is also the steadily growing range of modular preparations: a variety of base creams can be mixed with active agent concentrates so that that the cosmetic preparations can be individually adapted. Also KOKO's (the term is derived from the German words Kosmetik Konzept = cosmetic concept) staff number has augmented. It started as a one-person-company when moving to Leichlingen and now has 45 employees working in its location in Moltkestraße with its 3,000 m².

The company offers benefits such as flexible work hours and a pension plan (subsidized, deferred compensation), fitness and gym classes held by a certified PE instructor as well as English lessons for beginners and advanced learners, all free of charge and during working hours. English lessons turn out to be rather important considering the export ratio. 37.5 per cent of the products made in Leichlingen stay in Germany, about 12.5 per cent are exported to the European Market. The remaining 50 per cent are sold all over the world whereas the South East Asian market with about a quarter of total sales is rather strong.

Mr. Lautenschläger knows that the sector will continue to change. He is convinced: 'The cosmetic sector will continue to take a more medical approach'. Cosmeceuticals and device-based treatment will further increase. The growing sensitivity of consumers is a challenge that KOKO will meet by expanding its activities towards pharmaceutical standards. It is intended to expand the offer of modular and, in technological respect, high-end preparations and increase export activities. Mr. Lautenschläger is convinced that "quality will also pay off in future".

The dynamic person behind

Dr. Hans Lautenschläger studied chemistry and physics (minor subject) at the Free University of Berlin. From 1977 to 1987, Dr. Lautenschläger worked as a department manager in the R&D division of Nattermann & Cie. GmbH at Cologne where he developed new pharmaceutical actives for lipid metabolism disorders, inflammation and cardiovascular diseases. From 1987 to 1990, Dr. Lautenschläger changed over to the applications engineering of Nattermann Phospholipid GmbH specializing in the development of phosphatidylcholine-containing pharmaceutical and skin care preparations. From 1990 to 1998, Dr. Lautenschläger was general manager of Rhenus Wilhelm Reiners GmbH & Co. KG at Mönchengladbach; in this period innovative metalworking fluids and skin protection products for industrial use have been developed. As managing director and shareholder, he transformed KOKO GmbH & Co. KG into a globally operating company.

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