

PRESS RELEASE

GEA brings customer and supplier together to trial ‘GE Blister Free’ membranes for the dairy processing industry

Düsseldorf (Germany)/Hudson (Wisconsin, USA), December 13, 2016 – For the last two years, GEA in the USA has been working closely with General Electric (GE) to support the company’s membrane manufacturing technology to better meet their joint customers’ needs. This cooperation has resulted in the recent development of new ‘GE Blister Free’ reverse osmosis (RO) membranes that have the potential to significantly reduce costs for dairy processing plants.

In 2014 GEA and GE agreed to work jointly to solve the problem of blistering RO membranes in dairy processing that has plagued the industry for quite some time. RO membranes are especially susceptible to blistering owing to the high pressures experienced during the process. The problem can also occur in nanofiltration (NF) and ultrafiltration (UF) membranes when used in some applications.

These blisters pose a risk since they can harbor microorganisms and, when discovered during routine USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) inspections, can result in the plant being shut down immediately until the membranes have been replaced. Not only are the membranes themselves expensive, the cost of an unscheduled shutdown of the plant can be extreme. This high cost, plus the adverse publicity that could arise, have made the avoidance of blisters a key ambition in the industry for 30 years or more.

Following the GEA initiative, GE set about enhancing their RO membranes to stop blistering. GEA, with the cooperation of an end user, provided testing and evaluation facilities allowing membranes to work under operational conditions for over one year in GEA equipment. Applications tested included whey concentration and water recovery operations and several different membrane formulations were used during the test period. During testing, the final revision of membranes showed prevention of blistering.

“Our customer, just like many others, had been having a problem with the blistering of RO membranes for some time,” explains Mike Roberts, GEA Process Engineer. “By joining forces and working closely with GE we have been able to provide a solution that enhances GE’s product range giving it a competitive edge, reduces costs for our customers and helps to prevent the risk of product contamination. It also means that the USDA is happy – which has got to be a good thing!”

Mike Roberts continues by thanking his customer for its cooperation and congratulating GE for its ingenuity and perseverance in solving a problem that has existed in the industry for many years. “We were the

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intermediary,” he says. “The customer used our equipment which, in turn, used GE membranes. It shows that through cooperation it’s often possible to achieve remarkable results.”

Fred Liberatore, Global Commercial Director at GE explains, “Partnering GE’s technology with GEA’s processing knowledge to ultimately reduce product contamination is in everyone’s interest, especially the consumers.”

The improved ‘Blister Free RO Membranes’ are available from GE since November.

For editorial enquiries:

Corporate Media & Press

Ilja Zeidler

Peter-Müller-Str. 12, 40468 Düsseldorf, Germany

Phone +49 211 9136-1505

ilja.zeidler@gea.com

For business enquiries:

Manager-Technical Service-Membrane Filtration

Mark Brown

USA, Hudson

Phone +1 715 245 8604

mark.brown@gea.com

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About GEA

GEA is one of the largest suppliers for the food processing industry and a wide range of process industries that generated consolidated revenues of approximately EUR 4.6 billion in 2015. As an international technology group, the Company focuses on process technology and components for sophisticated production processes in various end-user markets. The Group generates more than 70 percent of its revenue in the food sector that enjoys long-term sustainable growth. As of September 30, 2016, the Company employed about 17,000 people worldwide. GEA is a market and technology leader in its business areas. The Company is listed in Germany’s MDAX (G1A, WKN 660 200). In addition, GEA’s share is a constituent of the MSCI Global Sustainability Indexes. Further information is available on the Internet at gea.com.

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