Responsible Sourcing of Natural Rubber: Continental Takes on Pioneering Role

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Hanover, September 28, 2022. Continental pursues a holistic approach to make the complex and fragmented supply chains for natural rubber more sustainable: The latest digital technologies, local involvement in the cultivation of rubber, and close cooperation with strong partners are aimed at creating more transparency along the entire value chain. “We actively take responsibility in our supply chains. Only when natural rubber is responsibly sourced we consider it a sustainable material,” says Claus Petschick, Head of Sustainability at Continental Tires. As of today, completely seamless traceability of natural rubber is technically impossible due to the high complexity of the supply chain. With its commitment, Continental is working at full speed on a blueprint for the sustainable and responsible structuring of supply chains.

Natural rubber is still essential for ensuring outstanding tire performance. This natural product accounts for between 10 and 40 percent of the entire weight of modern, high-performance tires. The special properties of natural rubber include the high level of strength and durability caused by the strain-induced crystallization of the rubber. Natural rubber is currently obtained almost exclusively from the rubber tree Hevea Brasiliensis. The European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers Association (ETRMA) estimates that up to six million smallholders worldwide are financially dependent on rubber extraction. In addition, the natural rubber passes through as many as seven different intermediaries and processing companies before it reaches for example Continental’s factory gates.

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Primary Email: silke.bernhardt@conti.de

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