

BASF exits biobased acrylic acid collaboration

DATE : 2015-01-27

BASF has decided to exit a biobased acrylic acid partnership with Novozymes and Cargill, Novozymes announced today. Novozymes and Cargill have collaborated on the technology since 2008. BASF, the world's biggest producer of acrylic acid via the conventional route of propylene oxidation, joined the partnership in 2012. The collaboration between Novozymes and Cargill, which they say will continue, is focused on developing microorganisms that can efficiently convert renewable feedstock into 3-hydroxypropionic acid (3HP), one possible precursor to acrylic acid. BASF's role was to develop the process for converting 3HP into acrylic acid. The reason for BASF's exit was not specified, and the company has not yet responded to requests for comment. Mark Morgan, Global managing director of renewable and bio-based chemicals at IHS Chemical tells CW that the challenges in making an acid biologically is the robustness of any microorganisms to sustained low pH operation.

"Several approaches have been demonstrated with other products like lactic acid in pH management and the development of lower pH tolerant systems... The 3-HPA side of the process appears to be workable," he says. "The challenge is the cost effective conversion of 3-HPA into crude or glacial acrylic acid." Acrylic acid is very reactive, even in a conventional process, he adds. Cargill and Novozymes say they have begun efforts to find a new commercialization partner.

SOURCE *Chemweek's Business Daily*