

For immediate release

Award for Customer Focus, Innovative Capacity, and Business Strength – nectanet Identifies Hidden Champion in the Koehler Group

- **Black Forest Power Region: one of the top three regions in Germany**
- **Consumers worldwide come into contact with Koehler Group products on a daily basis**
- **Customer focus, a key success factor, results in long-term customer relationships**

Oberkirch, Germany, 09/25/2025 – A recent study from the Fachhochschule Dortmund - University of Applied Sciences and Arts shows that the Black Forest Power Region is one of the TOP 3 hidden champion regions in Germany. It is against this backdrop that nectanet, the regional economic development network for the Black Forest Power Region, recently awarded the Koehler Group with its “Hidden Champion” distinction.

Scientific criteria form basis of award

Professor Jan-Philipp Büchler, who headed the study, put the Black Forest Power Region under a figurative magnifying glass for half a year. Working closely together with nectanet, he identified the hidden gems in the region’s economic network during this period. These companies, more specifically referred to as “hidden champions,” were picked out based on defined criteria: revenue, market position as determined by market share, and public awareness of the company.

There is much to like about the Koehler Group as a hidden champion: The family business is currently being run by its eighth generation, can look back at more than 210 years of history as a company, and is headquartered in Oberkirch, Germany. The company is not just a global supplier of premium specialty paper offerings, but also a pioneer in the generation and use of renewable energy – so much so, in fact, that renewable energy is now the second pillar undergirding the family business. Kai Furler, CEO of the Koehler Group, emphasized: “It is extremely likely that you’ve come into contact with Koehler Group products on a nearly daily basis without being aware of it, since we don’t sell directly to end consumers.” The company’s product portfolio includes specialty paper for playing and trading cards, checkout receipts, and labels, as well as flexible packaging paper that makes it possible to replace plastic in packaging solutions. In addition, the family business has an export percentage of around 70%, resulting in its products being used in more than 120 countries across the globe. “One thing that I’m particularly proud of is that this award recognizes our customer focus and innovative spirit,” Furler adds. In fact, this focus on the needs of customers worldwide is a key success factor when it comes to the Oberkirch-based company, with the result being that there are a significant number of customer relationships that have been in place for decades now. Not content to rest on its laurels, however, the Koehler Group has taken additional steps to further consolidate its pioneering status when it comes to paper innovations in the industry. One of them has

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been the inauguration of its Innovation Campus at its company headquarters at the beginning of the year, the result of more than 12 million euros being invested in the state-of-the-art work and laboratory environment on an area of more than 1,300 m².

“The Black Forest Power Region is number three in Germany as a whole, and is ahead of everyone else in the state of Baden-Württemberg,” nectanet Managing Director Dominik Fehringer happily mentions. “With a total of 45 companies that were identified as hidden champions based on rigorous criteria, our region is packed with these economic engines. The study not only undergirds our subjective impressions and helps explain why our region stands out, but also confirms our network’s assertions that our entrepreneurs are world leaders.” The study revealed that the Black Forest Power Region has ten hidden champions per 100,000 residents, which is significantly more than the average of four in Baden-Württemberg, four in North Rhine-Westphalia, and two in Germany as a whole.



Figure: The Black Forest Power Region is one of the TOP 3 hidden champion regions in Germany: nectanet Managing Director Dominik Fehringer handing over the award to Koehler Group CEO Kai Furler

Source: nectanet

About the Koehler Group

The Koehler Group was founded in 1807 and has been family-run from that moment to the present day. The group's core business activity lies in the development and production of high-quality specialty paper. This includes—among others—thermal paper, playing card board, beverage coasters, fine paper, carbon-less paper, recycled paper, decor paper, wood pulp board, sublimation paper, and also innovative specialty paper for the packaging industry. In Germany, the Koehler Group employs around 2,500 people across five production sites, with three additional sites in the USA. The group operates internationally, with an export share of around 70% in 2023, and brings in an annual turnover of around 1.1 billion euros.

As an energy-intensive company, Koehler invests in renewable energy projects such as wind energy, hydropower, photovoltaics, and biomass with its Koehler Renewable Energy business unit. The Koehler Group has set a goal of producing more energy from renewable sources by 2030 than is required for its paper production operations.

With its Koehler Innovative Solutions division, the Koehler Group is collaborating with start-ups to promote innovations in the core business segments “paper” and “renewable energy”.

Find more information at: <https://www.koehler.com>

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