

Novapex Awarded Pierre Potier Prize for New Isopropyl Acetate Production Process Using Reactive Distillation



Novapex, part of the Novacap Group, has been awarded the Pierre Potier Prize for its innovative new isopropyl acetate production process using reactive distillation. This new product is a valuable addition to the range of oxygenated solvents already produced by Novapex, isopropanol and acetone in particular. The awards ceremony was held yesterday in Paris with Emmanuel Macron, Minister of Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs.



Pierre Potier Scientific and Technological Prize

Novapex has developed an innovative new concept that combines reactive distillation process intensification with energy and environmental efficiency. The company partnered with IFP Energies nouvelles (IFPEN) to develop this innovation. IFPEN developed and patented the reactive distillation technology used in etherification reactions. Novapex designed the new IPAC production process with this French technology as its base.

This is the first time in history that reactive distillation has been used for this reaction in these conditions. Intensifying the separation and reaction stages and using existing internal thermal flux allows this process to consume very little energy.

Novapex produces isopropanol using acetone and acetic acid by-products from aspirin production in Novacap's Pharmaceutical & Cosmetics Division. Using locally-produced raw materials for this process fits perfectly into the circular economy's virtuous logic. Because this innovative and environmentally-friendly new production process uses already very pure isopropanol, Novapex can offer an exceptionally pure isopropyl acetate sought-after for the most exacting applications, such as pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

Featured in the manufacturing process for a large number of synthetic resins, isopropyl acetate is also very commonly used as an extraction solvent in the pharmaceutical industry, in manufacturing ink for food packaging, and in the cosmetics and perfume industry, particularly due to its intrinsic qualities. This new unit, built on the Roussillon chemical platform and operational since late 2015, required an investment of €4 million for a capacity of more than 5,000 metric tons.

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About Novacap:

Novapex (a Novacap Group subsidiary within the Performance Chemicals Division) is a leading player in the phenol and oxygenated solvents chain. Novacap is a global chemicals group that produces and distributes essential chemicals that are used in everyday products. The group is a leader in the end markets it serves: pharmacy and healthcare, foodstuffs and animal nutrition, cosmetics and fragrances, detergent, and the environment. The group manufactures a wide range of products including aspirin, paracetamol, and other active pharmaceutical ingredients; ketamine, salicylic acid, para-aminophenol, soda ash, sodium bicarbonate, phenol and oxygenated solvents, hydrochloric acid, and ferric chloride. With a growing international presence, supported by internal growth as well as by strong partnerships, the group has experienced sustainable and profitable growth for several years. As a supplier to more than 750 customers around the world, the group has made sustainable development a key priority, combining respect for the environment, economic performance, and social responsibility. With 14 sites worldwide and 1,600 employees, the group is made up of three divisions: Mineral Specialities, Pharmaceutical & Cosmetics, and Performance Chemicals. Novacap's headquarters are located in Lyon (France).
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