

# PRESS RELEASE

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**Safe harvests, healthy seeds — for the good of humanity and the environment**

## **Spin-off E-VITA wins Fraunhofer Founder Award 2021**

**The Fraunhofer spin-off E-VITA receives the Fraunhofer Founder Award 2021, which is endowed with 5000 euros. The spin-off managed to win over the jury, consisting of Fraunhofer Venture and High-Tech Gründerfonds, with its physical process for disinfecting seeds — an environmentally friendly alternative to treatment with fungicides.**

With its environmentally friendly, physical approach to disinfecting seeds, the Fraunhofer spin-off E-VITA GmbH, Dresden, won the Fraunhofer Founder Award 2021. The technology was developed at the Fraunhofer Institute for Organic Electronics, Electron Beam and Plasma Technology FEP. Contrary to conventional processes, which involve treatment with fungicides and similar substances, this process completely eliminates ecological follow-up costs caused by chemical emissions in agriculture. Moreover, in the medium term, E-VITA will pave the way for a significant cost reduction in grain treatment. Its physical disinfection process thus makes a significant contribution to achieving the goals of the EU Green Deal and the Farm2Fork strategy. The novel process is also expected to significantly reduce the demand for fertilizers with the treated seeds by adding microorganisms that stimulate the plants' nutrient uptake after germination.

### **Environmentally-friendly technology as a crucial factor for economic success**

The physical process uses the germicidal effect of accelerated electrons. During sterilization, these penetrate just deep enough to have no effect on the inside of the seed. The low-emission and cost-saving technology was tested at Fraunhofer FEP over many years by independent federal and state institutions and, later, together with its industry partner Nordkorn Saaten GmbH (now Ceravis AG). The joint venture E-VITA GmbH, which was spun off in June 2021, now continues this successful partnership and combines the technology and research expertise of Fraunhofer FEP with the established sales strength and customer proximity of Ceravis AG.

Today, E-VITA offers two variants of seed sterilization: mobile plants that can be rented by farmers for on-site application or sterilization in centrally located plants, which is performed by seed producers who treat the seeds before delivering them to growers. In the long term, the joint venture's physical sterilization process is expected to become the most important disinfection process on the market.

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#### **Editorial Notes**

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## Cutting-edge technology as a driver of sustainable change

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“Starting a business creates new perspectives for technologies and opens up previously untapped markets. Taking this step requires a great deal from everyone involved, from the employees of the young company as well as its business partners and shareholders. In addition to the necessary conviction that your start-up can be successful, a whole lot of courage is also required to leave the paths to which you have been accustomed up to that point. The support provided by experienced experts creates a feeling of security and trust and thus enables us to focus on the essentials,” says André Weidauer, managing director of E-VITA GmbH, about the steps they took to create their spin-off. “In our case, both shareholders, Fraunhofer and Ceravis, have always been approachable during the initial phase and now also during the first year of business, putting common goals above individual interests and thus enabling us to start what we hope will be a successful company,” Weidauer continues.

Dr. Alex von Frankenberg, managing director of High-Tech Gründerfonds, adds: “E-VITA is a perfect example of how cutting-edge technologies and entrepreneurship, in combination with established companies, can solve key challenges of our time.”

In the jury's statement, Thomas Doppelberger, head of Fraunhofer Venture, particularly appreciated the fact that E-VITA's process not only opens up new perspectives for resource-conserving and sustainable agriculture, but also stands for a fruitful cooperation between research and industry: “E-VITA combines environmental protection and efficiency for the future of our food production while, with its promising new transfer path, also serving as a model for joint ventures from academia.”



The Fraunhofer Founders Award 2021 was presented as part of the Fraunhofer Jahrestagung: Dr. Alex von Frankenberg (HTGF), André Weidauer (E-VITA), Christian Süß (E-VITA) und Prof. Dr. Alexander Kurz (Fraunhofer) (from left to right)



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The winners of the Fraunhofer Founders Award: André Weidauer, Christian Süß and Ceravis partner Maik Schwarz (from left to right)

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The truck-based mobile system can treat 25 tons of seed per hour.

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### **About the Fraunhofer start-up award**

The Fraunhofer start-up award was introduced in the scope of the new spin-off and investment strategy of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft and was awarded for the first time in 2016. For the sixth time already, it honors a spin-off that is active and successful on the market and offers products or services with a direct benefit for society. With the award Fraunhofer Venture and High-Tech Gründerfonds aim to honor extraordinary start-up projects and further advance spin-off ideas within the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft.

## About E-VITA

E-VITA GmbH, founded in 2021, aims to offer its modern electron treatment technology to all commercial seed processors, growers and farmers who propagate their own seeds. In doing so, E-VITA cooperates with modern and high-performance machine and plant manufacturers.

[www.e-vita.de](http://www.e-vita.de)

## About High-Tech Gründerfonds

High-Tech Gründerfonds (HTGF) is a seed investor that finances high-potential, tech-driven start-ups. With around EUR 900 million in total investment volume across three funds and an international network of partners, HTGF has already helped forge more than 650 start-ups since 2005. Driven by their expertise, entrepreneurial spirit and passion, its team of experienced investment managers and startup experts help guide the development of young companies. HTGF's focus is on high-tech start-ups in the fields of digital tech, industrial technology, life sciences, chemistry and related business areas. To date, external investors have injected more than EUR 4 billion into the HTGF portfolio via more than 1,900 follow-on financing rounds. HTGF has also successfully sold interests in more than 150 companies.

Investors in this public-private partnership include the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, KfW Capital, and Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft e.V., as well as the companies ALTANA, BASF, BAYER, B.Braun, Boehringer Ingelheim, Robert Bosch, BÜFA, CEWE, Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Post DHL, Dräger, 1+1 AG, EVONIK, EWE AG, FOND OF, Haniel, Hettich, Knauf, Körber, LANXESS, media + more venture Beteiligungs GmbH & Co. KG, PHOENIX CONTACT, QIAGEN, RWE Generation SE, SAP, Schufa, Schwarz Gruppe, STIHL, Thüga, Vector Informatik, WACKER and Wilh. Werhahn KG.

[www.high-tech-gruenderfonds.de](http://www.high-tech-gruenderfonds.de)

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**Fraunhofer Venture** Fraunhofer Venture represents the central spin-off and stake management unit of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. Through an extensive support program, it provides founders, start-ups, industry and investors with access to the cutting-edge technologies of the 76 Fraunhofer Institutes, the Fraunhofer infrastructure and Fraunhofer expertise with over 7,600 patent families through a comprehensive support program. The range of services includes complete support and consulting from the idea to the founding of a company, active participation management of Fraunhofer participations, support with finding investors up to a possible sale of the company.  
[www.fraunhoferventure.de](http://www.fraunhoferventure.de)

The **Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft** based in Germany is the world's leading applied research organization. Prioritizing key future-relevant technologies and commercializing its findings in business and industry, it plays a major role in the innovation process. A trailblazer and trendsetter in innovative developments and research excellence, it is helping shape our society and our future. Founded in 1949, the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft currently operates 76 institutes and research units throughout Germany. Over 30,000 employees, predominantly scientists and engineers, work with an annual research budget of €2.9 billion. Fraunhofer generates €2.5 billion of this from contract research.  
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