Interview with Jochen Sanguinette, Chairman of Trelleborg Sealing Solutions Germany GmbH

1. What, in your view, distinguishes your company as a driver of CleanTech?
   By definition, our innovative sealing solutions for machines used in forestry and agricultural already help protect the environment because they ensure that no harmful materials from inside the machines, such as oil or grease, get into the soil. We’ve been doing this for more than 50 years! Trelleborg has supplied parts for wind energy plants ever since this technology was first launched. Seals provided by Trelleborg Sealing Solutions contribute to the efficient operation of hydraulic and other systems where all components need to withstand tough conditions.

2. Many view CleanTech as a growth market. Do you share this opinion and what role does wind energy play?
   I am convinced that renewable energy already offers the world’s population more opportunities than risks in the medium term. This justifies investment in new technologies. With renewable energy accounting for an increasing market share, it is necessary to reduce maintenance requirements associated with wind turbines, for example, and to increase service life. As a manufacturer of seals we see this as a challenge, especially as many seals are used at decentralised locations, often high up, where maintenance tasks are difficult and costly to carry out. The number of wind turbines will potentially depend on public opinion. Offshore solutions may help remedy this situation. Many cooperation ventures concerning this have been initiated in the last few months. The German Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) recently announced that 21 wind farm projects comprising a total of 1,497 wind turbines have been approved to date off the North and Baltic Sea coasts. The first wind farm projects to incorporate our sealing solutions have already been completed.

3. Where do you see synergies in the various areas of CleanTech?
   It’s all about the energy mix! From mobile biomass power plants to electricity from the desert, wind energy or solar power – we need to leverage every option available to us. Ultimately, marketable solutions will prevail although there is obviously a danger that competition will not really come about due to subsidies.

4. What is your growth strategy for the field of CleanTech?
   The challenges associated with new energy sources also extend to adapting sealing materials to biological substances which can sometimes be aggressive. Our ability to fulfil these requirements is connected to the fact that Trelleborg Sealing Solutions has consolidated its materials expertise over a number of years now.
We have no fewer than eight R&D centres around the globe as well as materials laboratories for virtually all sealing materials.

5. How do you rate the political support for the CleanTech industry to date, both within Germany and at European level? What could be optimised in future?
The German federal government’s objectives at both national and European level are to increase efficiency by 20 percent, reduce CO2 emissions by 20 percent and to achieve a 20 percent share of renewable energy use by 2020. The amendment of the Renewable Energy Act (EEG) has given manufacturers in the mechanical and plant engineering sector a reliable basis on which to plan and has paved the way for further innovation. However, where there is light, there is also shadow: the back and forth regarding the quota system for biofuels and shelving the Energy Efficiency Act (EnEfG) slow down or make it impossible for companies to reach decisions. Planning security, reliability and consistency within the political framework are the top priority so that the mechanical and plant engineering sector can play its role fully as a driver of innovation.

6. Do you think that the issue of CleanTech has entered into our social, political and economic consciousness?
Yes, consumer demand for renewable energy is rising – not least due to subsidies. However, the prospect of double-digit growth in the CleanTech industry over the next ten years is motivating companies to invest in renewable energy sources, particularly in tough economic times. Politicians need to make sure that renewable energy continues to be encouraged, alongside the possible extension of the lifetime of nuclear power stations. If not, we are possibly discarding an opportunity for change that will be difficult to reverse.

7. What distinguishes Germany as a location for CleanTech?
Our high-tech setup! This includes high-performing, highly trained staff as well as advanced research and development centres.