



© private

There is a lot that is different this year. With the cancellation of Fakuma, which actually would have been opening its doors in a few days' time, a cornerstone of the plastic industry's events calendar has gone. And, last year, who would have thought that the much-reviled packaging sector would suddenly be-

come one of the plastics industry's winners? This is due to the growing need for hygiene and greater volumes of consumer goods packaging required on account of the pandemic. Home office, digital conferences and masks in public spaces are no longer peripheral issues, but have become daily routine.

There are parallels here with the circular economy and plastics recycling. The fears that these issues might be eclipsed by the

New Normals

pandemic have not proved justified. As one of the participants in a round table of plastics manufacturers so aptly put it, "no longer trends, but the new normal." This fact is underscored by the extensive Special on advances in plastics and rubber in this edition. With virtually all polymers, the developers are working on more sustainable products, mechanical and chemical recycling and building up circular material flows.

We can already see the results. The recently published "Material Flow Analysis Plastics in Germany" shows, for example, that, before the Covid 19 crisis, recyclates were increasingly replacing virgin materials. Of course, these advances are by no means sufficient. Not nearly enough recycled material is being consumed for that. In addition, the building up of the circular material flows and implementation of chemical recycling are often still in their infancy. The long-term effects of the pandemic, too, cannot be foreseen yet, though we seem to be making progress. Recycled fractions and sustainable polymers will hopefully no longer be newsworthy in the foreseeable future, since they are simply too normal.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Florian Streifinger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Florian Streifinger [florian.streifinger@hanser.de]