

Research on Winning Chemicals from Trees is awarded the 25th Marcus Wallenberg Prize

Description

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During a ceremony at the Grand Hôtel in Stockholm on 6 October, the Swedish King His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf awarded the Marcus Wallenberg Prize 2008 to Prof. Bjarne Holmbom and Mr. Christer Eckerman, Åbo Akademi University, Åbo, Finland. They were chosen for their breakthrough research and innovation creating a platform for new applications of chemical components in wood.

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The Laureates have created an understanding of the fundamental chemistry of spruce tree knots, i.e. the part of the branches that is embedded in the stem. They developed technical separation methods to extract tree knots from the pulping process and to isolate and purify chemicals from the tree knots, opening the field for many potential applications and uses. The selective removal of knots from the pulping process brings opportunities for additional benefits by reducing process disturbances, reducing the use of bleaching chemicals and energy, and allowing more consistent quality of the paper products to be produced.

By methodical research of the highest quality, the Laureates have significantly contributed to creating a platform for the forest products industry to improve and broaden its role and commercial prospects with a range of new products and implications e.g. for chemicals, energy, production efficiency and sustainability.

“The awarded research holds promise of adding value and enhancing the image of our business as capable of bringing benefits to society. As such it will also serve as a pointer to the future of our business, demonstrating that new ground is still to be explored when it comes to more fully developing the forest products industry to sustainably serve future society” said Marcus Wallenberg, Chairman of the Marcus Wallenberg Foundation at the award ceremony.

The Laureates

Professor Bjarne Holmbom was born 1943. His research areas are wood and paper chemistry and his PhD thesis was presented 1978 at Åbo Akademi University. Since 1981 he has held different professorial chairs at this university, as well as several research positions financed by the Academy of Finland. Furthermore, Holmbom has been visiting professor in Canada, USA and France.

Mr. Christer Eckerman (M.Sc.), born 1948, is a researcher in the group of Holmbom. He has been

actively involved in all parts of the work described above. The developed industrial separation method, paving the way for a large-scale production of the chemical components in wood, is based on an original idea of Christer Eckerman.

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For general information about the prize, see www.mwp.org