

Interview with Mr. Anil Sönmez, CEO of Almatis GmbH

As a global leader in specialty alumina, Almatis has built over a century of expertise and established strong partnerships across refractories, ceramic, and other key industries. With a broad product portfolio and reliable supply capabilities, the company has earned a solid reputation worldwide.

Against the backdrop of carbon neutrality, digital transformation, and supply chain upgrades, China has emerged as one of the most strategic markets for Almatis.

In this exclusive interview, Refwin is honored to invite Mr. Anil Sönmez, CEO of Almatis, to share the company's global transformation and innovation journey, as well as his insights and commitment to the future development of the Chinese market.



Refwin: Almatis has been a pioneer in specialty alumina for decades. How do you define the company's current positioning in the global refractory raw materials landscape? Could you share the company's core strategic goals and how they guide its development?

Mr. Anil Sönmez: First of all, Almatis is the pioneer of the alumina business. We have to always remember everything that started with Almatis 100 years ago. Whatever we do, whatever we plan we have to build upon this legacy, this is the first important thing we carry with us. Secondly, Almatis stands as the only true global enterprise in the alumina landscape. Leveraging our dual strengths as both the industry pioneer and its sole global supplier, our core strategy is to carry forward these

advantages and build upon them to serve the evolving global markets. Because the global markets are changing, we are driving continuous innovation aligned with our customers' evolving needs as well as trying to be even closer to them in the markets where they aim to expand or solidify their market position.

Refwin: Beyond product excellence, what are the most important strategic transformations Almatis has undertaken in recent years, and how do these shape its future growth?

Mr. Anil Sönmez: We are not independent from what is happening globally. If you look at the global landscape, it's very volatile, changing, and challenging. To adapt to these shifts and strengthen Almatis' market position, we have implemented a series of strategic initiatives over recent years. A key focus for us, and something we know matters deeply to our customers, is geographic expansion.

As I mentioned, Almatis is the only truly global supplier of alumina products, but that's not enough in today's environment. Market volatility, supply chain disruptions, geopolitical shifts, and evolving economic conditions have all driven changes in where our customers operate. Over decades, we've seen industry momentum swing westward and then eastward. What we have seen post corona is a shift of industry towards more east. We have been addressing these shifts in the last 3-4 years.

We moved our spinel production from Germany to China. Since the market in India is growing, we inaugurated a new plant in 2022. Now we are preparing for the second phase of our investment, which will hopefully come online within the next two to three years. Chinese market has been always important for us, and we have seen that there is future in the Chinese market. This year we did the groundbreaking of our new plant that will be coming on stream in Qingdao China by end of next year. We are also very strong in the west in Europe and in the U.S. the economic conditions the challenges are different, on that part of the world what we are doing is investing more in improving our reliability, improving our speed to address the customer needs. We have been combining the control centers in the Netherlands. we are doing the same in the U.S. as well as in Germany these changes will bring more reliability and faster response time to our customers. What we are doing is investing in the cutting-edge technologies that will also secure the

production capabilities of Almatis in the next coming decades.

Refwin: Sustainability is a common challenge in the refractory supply chain. How does Almatis balance cost, performance, and carbon reduction, especially in high-energy specialty alumina production?

Mr. Anil Sönmez: Almatis is very lucky in one aspect. While every company talks about its people, Almatis really has dedicated and committed people when I tie this commitment to the future of Almatis sustainability strategy that our people come to the first place.

Three years ago, our employees by themselves without the management push created a mission which is called Mission NeutrAL that defines the roadmap. Between 2022 and 2030 to make Almatis more sustainable is our first target to achieve. You can make a lot of strategies you can make a lot of roadmaps, but how have you been performing last couple of years after defining Mission NeutrAL.

Making transparency of our carbon footprint that's very important for our customers. Our customers can get a third party verified carbon footprint of our products which will enable them to compare those that are in the market. So, they can know what they are buying and they can select, at least from Almatis the lowest carbon footprint products. Another which makes me very excited is the products that we have been developing. Products that bring sustainability value to the steel makers and to our customers as well. We have developed the product called ECO-TAB®, our products already intrinsically provide the lowest CO2 compared to others. Our products are good in CO2 footprint, but ECO-TAB® is even better that brings double digit CO2 footprint reduction to the market. In a couple of years this will be one of the most important products that brings a sustainability angle in the market.

Refwin: China is the world's largest refractory market. How important is China in Almatis' global layout, and what unique value does Almatis want to bring to Chinese customers? Chinese customers value long-term commitment and reliability. What concrete steps is Almatis taking to strengthen its service and presence in the Chinese market?

Mr. Anil Sönmez: Almatis is a truly global enterprise. More than 100 years of expertise brings the competence and capabilities globally to Almatis to develop further. We have different R&D centers globally in different regions in the US. in Europe in India. and China is also part of

this global R&D network. With these global networks, we are cooperating with steel makers, with customers down in the value chain.

Since we are developing our production capabilities further in line with this investment. We will be also adding up more competencies and more people in the R&D capabilities of China. With these increased capabilities we want to be closer to local Chinese steel makers local manufacturers as well as refractory either in the industry of refractory manufacturing or other industries we are in and we want to continue to collaborate with them.

Refwin: What are the key shifts in the refractory raw material demand such as tabular alumina in the next 3 to 5 years and how Almatis is preparing for them.

Mr. Anil Sönmez: Every industry is demanding more. It's the same for the steel industry, also the same for the refractory industry. So the customers are demanding more, if you put a frame we try to create a triangle to put these demands.

First of all, the operation of the triangle is the customers are demanding higher quality tighter specs grades. Secondly, the customers are demanding the best cost of ownership. Thirdly, we have been talking about sustainability that comes into the picture, while developing new grades, we try to close the edges of this triangle. I'll go into more detail about ECO-TAB®. This is one of the grades that's addressing this with a higher quality, tighter spec rate. It brings a better cost of ownership absolutely with the steel makers saving energy. The customers and steel makers are using less material to produce refractories, so you get a higher-grade better performance product which consumes less energy, at the production of the end product and which requires less material used which is a saving. And finally, it is the product that has the lowest carbon footprint that any customer can buy in the market. This product is an example of what we can do, and this product is an example of what we want to do in the future. If you were to describe our Almatis vision for the next decade. in one sentence, what would it be. Our vision is to innovate alumina and beyond for tomorrow. We have been successfully innovating for many decades and now it's time to go beyond.

Refwin: We appreciate Almatis for taking the time to share its perspectives and wish the company continued success ahead.

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