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Zeon establishes new research facility to develop plant-based production processes for synthetic rubber raw materials at the Zeon Chemicals Yonezawa site

Zeon Corporation

Zeon Corporation (Zeon; head office: Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo; President and CEO: Tetsuya Toyoshima) has constructed a new research facility on the premises of Zeon Chemicals Yonezawa Co., Ltd. (head office: Yonezawa-shi, Yamagata; President: Kazunori Watanabe) to develop production processes for plant-derived raw materials. This facility will accelerate the development of biotechnology to produce butadiene and isoprene directly, which are key components of synthetic rubber, from plant-derived materials, with the goal of contributing to the realization of a circular economy.

Under STAGE30, the Group's Medium-Term Business Plan, Zeon has positioned "Promote a transformation of monozukuri to realize carbon neutrality and a circular economy" as Strategy 1 while also setting a target to reduce CO₂ emissions across the entire Group by 42% by fiscal 2030 compared to fiscal 2020 levels. By establishing this integrated research facility, which enables the simultaneous development of both chemical reaction and biofermentation processes, Zeon aims to promote monozukuri with a focus on the conversion of raw materials toward the realization of a sustainable society.



New research facility

This initiative is part of the "Development of Manufacturing Technology Using Carbon Recycling for Commodity Chemicals Used in Synthetic Rubber," a project jointly carried out by Zeon and The Yokohama Rubber Co., Ltd. (Yokohama Rubber; Chairman and CEO: Masataka Yamaishi), which has been selected under the "Development of Technology for Producing Raw Materials for Plastics Using CO₂ and Other Sources," one of the Green Innovation Fund Projects of the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO).

Through research and development at this facility, Zeon aims to commercialize biotechnology for the direct production of butadiene and isoprene from plant-based materials by 2034. This facility has been certified as eligible for support under the Yamagata Prefecture Business Location Promotion Subsidy Program and has received partial construction funding from the prefecture.

Overview of research facility

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| 1. Building summary | Total floor area of 590.34 m ² (two stories) |
| 2. Location | 3-446-13 Hachimandaira, Yonezawa-shi, Yamagata 992-1128 (on the premises of Zeon Chemicals Yonezawa) |
| 3. Completion date | May 23, 2025 |
| 4. Building features | Laboratories equipped with local exhaust ventilation, as well as offices and meeting rooms |

NEDO's Green Innovation Fund Project

The Green Innovation Fund Project is a program established by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) to accelerate innovation through structural transformation of energy and industrial sectors and bold investment toward achieving the national goal

of “reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050.” The program provides a continuous ten-year support to companies and organizations that pursue this goal as a business commitment in the areas from research and development, demonstration to commercial implementation. As part of a cooperative effort led by the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), the National University Corporation Institute of Science Tokyo (formerly the Tokyo Institute of Technology), and the national research and development agency RIKEN, Zeon and Yokohama Rubber are working on two project themes. The current initiative falls under the theme of “Development of technology for production of butadiene and isoprene from plant-based and other sustainable materials.”

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