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Final report of spoga+gafa Cologne 2008: once again high trade visitor quality

spoga+gafa 2008: World market place for the green sector

41,500 trade visitors from 100 countries - 55-percent foreign share - Positive response to the "Boulevard of Excellence", "Green Italy" and event programme for motorized garden appliance retailers

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High internationality and visitor quality: spoga+gafa Cologne - International Trade Fair for Sport, Camping and Garden Lifestyle and International Garden Trade Fair once again confirmed their role in 2008 as the meeting place for the worldwide garden and leisure market trade. 2,155 suppliers from 57 countries presented their new products and services covering all aspects of garden care and life in gross exhibition space of 290,600 m². Oliver P. Kuhrt, Executive Vice-President Koelnmesse GmbH: "The quality of the visitors and the increased internationality were striking, positive features. This year's spoga+gafa has also been characterized by a particularly large commitment on the part of its exhibitors." Including estimates for the last day of the fair, the event attracted 41,500 trade visitors to the Cathedral City.

In addition to the numerous world new products and innovations presented at the fair, the target group-orientated events, special shows and workshops met with a positive response from the trade visitors. In particular, the "Boulevard of Excellence", which ran through the Exhibition Centre like a "green" thread and brought together premium suppliers in all segments in the most diverse ways, was well received by the fair's visitors. A high visitor frequency was also registered by "spoga+gafa in Action". In the open grounds between Halls 6 and 7 the visitors were able to try out new products and innovations from the motorized garden appliance sector. Mediterranean-like inspiration and contacts to the Italian garden market were provided by "Green Italy" - the Forum on the Northern Boulevard became a meeting

place for participants and interested parties in connection with this year's partner country.

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Quality of the international trade visitors once again at a high-level "The international decision-makers from the industry and trade were here", that was the consistent statement made in the spoga+gafa exhibition halls. This is also confirmed by the neutral visitor survey: almost 90 percent of respondents were involved in purchasing and procurement decisions, 44.4 percent even to a decisive extent. At almost 60 percent, the trade - representatives from all levels came to Cologne - once again provided the strongest visitor group, while the industry accounted for 19.7 percent of the respondents and 11.7 percent came from the service sector. Despite the loyal, regular visitors, numerous first-time customers were also determined to visit the event: more than one third (38 percent) were attending spoga+gafa for the first time. For the great majority the visit was more than worthwhile - almost 72 percent of those interviewed said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their objectives attained at the fair and with the event's product ranges. The visitors to the fair also gave the fair a good rating when it came to the services provided at the event: almost 80% of the visitors surveyed assessed them as good or very good. As a result, it is certain or likely that almost 70% of the fair's guests will return to spoga 2009 in Cologne. Even as many as 90 percent of the respondents said they would recommend a visit to spoga+gafa Cologne to a good business friend.

Good product range in all fair segments

The largest product group at spoga+gafa 2008 was once again provided by the "Outdoor Living" section with its "Furniture & Home Items" segment. In the "Outdoor activities" area, the "Grills & Barbecue" segment was the most strongly represented, complemented by the "Camping & Leisure" and "Sports & Games" segments. In the "Outdoor Technology" section, the "Machines & Equipment" product group had its nose out in front ahead of the "Equipment & Garden Structures" and "Hand Tools & Accessories" sections. The largest contingent in the "In/Outdoor-Ambience" sector was presented by "Floristry Supplies & Decorations", followed by "Water Technology & Outdoor Lighting". In addition suppliers were also represented here in the "Plants & Plant Care", "Pet Care Products & Accessories" as well as "Services" sectors.

Green sector banking on growth in the coming year

Even if raw materials and energy are becoming more expensive: the sectors participating at spoga+gafa are painting a positive picture for the future. In this connection the suppliers are benefiting among others from the climatic change - the summers are getting longer, people are preferring to stay outdoors and staying there longer. At the end of spoga+gafa, the Federal Association of the German Sporting

Goods Industry (Bundesverband der Deutschen Sportartikel -Industrie - BSI) - conceptual sponsor of spoga - therefore expressed its optimism: "Nature, health, quality - these trend themes in the garden and leisure sector were also a key focal point at spoga+gafa. Despite the increased cost of living - in particularly due to the high energy prices - the consumers have a positive attitude to leisure products", said BSI President Désirée Derin-Holzapfel. And she went on to add: "In this sector, the industry is therefore continuing to focus on consumers' desire to buy and the quality of its products. This was also a noticeable trend at this year's spoga+gafa. "Be it the specialist trade or DIY/home improvement centre: the garden business is also continuing to bloom. The Association of the German Garden Industry (Industrieverband Garten - IVG), the conceptual sponsor of gafa, emphasized that the "Garden world of experience" continued to be very popular. Ansgar Paul, Deputy Chairman, IVG: "This spoga+gafa has once again shown: Cologne is the most important platform for international contacts in the green industry. Even if the energy and raw materials costs are placing a burden on the companies: with intelligent new products and innovations, the industry has proved how innovative the garden market is once again in 2008. This was also confirmed and rewarded by the trade visitors who attended the Cologne fair. The sector is therefore looking ahead to next season with optimism."

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High-tech and design for "Outdoor living"

With 630 exhibiting companies, the largest sector at spoga+gafa once again occupied a leading position among trade fairs worldwide and succeeded once again with quality, innovativeness and design at the highest level. "The significance of garden furniture for the consumer is continuing to increase", was the statement made by many exhibitors. Spectacular high-tech materials also attracted the trade visitors' attention as did exceptional design - in some cases shapes and styles based on nature provided the inspiration and basis for the optics - and smart, stylish functions. In addition, the trend of recent years is continuing: the borders between the Indoor and Outdoor sectors are blurring and merging, the sofa is now also always increasingly seen in the garden or on the patio. What used to be quite mundanely regarded and treated as a plain item of seating and reclining furniture "for outdoors", has now finally secured a permanent place in the sphere of cult-status objects: the green living room on the front doorstep is both an impressive as well as relaxing lifestyle oasis. The exhibitors were very satisfied with the quality of the trade visitors from all over the world, which included both the regular customers as well as numerous new interested parties. A special focal point for the trade fair guests: new products, innovations and trends.

Visitors all fired up for "Grills & Barbecue"

The fact that grills and barbecues are still continuing to set the trend was confirmed and shown in Hall 5.1. There the market leaders were rewarded for their new products and innovations by a high visitor frequency coupled with much interest. "The share of foreign visitors has risen. Everyone who is of significance in the sector - both on the exhibitors' and visitors' side - was here", said one exhibitor commenting on the visitors. Kurt Schlieper, Executive Director Barbecue Industry Association Grillverband e.V.: "At spoga+gafa the Grills & Barbecue sector is showing the world its whole potential. Whether young or old, value-for-money or high price, for party or gourmet barbecuers: in Cologne the specialist trade was able to find the matching products and ranges for all its target groups. The trend towards the high-quality appliance is however clearly continuing." In this connection, the suppliers impressed in equal measure with technical refinements as well as new design. Motorized systems are now doing almost all the work for the barbecuer and ensuring greater convenience as is the further development of the various grilling and barbecuing techniques - the key phrase here: indirect barbecuing. But the "hot" grills and barbecues' outfit is also spot on: whereas in the past the appliances' optics were mainly dominated by the metal used in them, today the new products and innovations shine in bright, trendy tones or impress with exquisite understatement. The kitchen is increasingly following the living room trend and moving outdoors, in many cases resulting in demand for gourmet barbecuing on high-tech products.

Camping, sports and games: more fun for outdoors

Once again in 2008 one colour trend dominated Hall 5.2: the multi-colour one. The exhibitors presented a broad range featuring highly colourful new products and innovations for outdoor activities, which was well frequented by the trade visitors. The spectrum extended from camping supplies through to water sports up to articles for sports and games in leisure time and holidays. In this connection the manufacturers focused on a wealth of ideas and creativeness: in their ranges the exhibitors presented among others paddling pools for the youngest children, toy vehicles, which can be assembled by the children themselves, solar energy-powered MP3 players or the fridge for outdoor use.

Large numbers of visitors for the brand suppliers of outdoor technology

Have a look and try things out was the slogan in the "Outdoor technology" sector. With entertaining product demonstrations - which in some cases also included the open grounds - the brand manufacturers in particular became the visitor attractions in this product segment. "The share of international visitors, particularly from Eastern Europe - has risen. The quality of the trade visitors at spoga+gafa 2008 is very good", was thus the comment on many stands. Within the framework of the Specialist Trade

Centre, the new Qualification Marketing Concept (QMF) for the motorized and garden appliances specialist trade was presented in detail, which provided important impulses for the specialist trade. The visitor numbers were particularly large in those areas where the manufacturers used spoga+gafa as the platform for presenting world innovations and new products. Innovations such as lawnmowers with integrated fertilizer function met with just as great an interest as did mowers in "whispering mode" and lawn robots with grass recognition system. Easier gardening and work facilitation, uncomplicated operating processes and improved appliance services nationwide - always taking into account environmental friendliness and energy efficiency - were also the focus of attention. In the area of rechargeable garden appliances and tools, the innovative lithium-ion-technology is continuing to make inroads. In this connection, the exhibitors present were able to mostly fill the gaps with their innovations, which several renowned manufacturers had caused through their absence. "The participation at spoga+gafa has been very worthwhile for us", was one exemplary conclusion.

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Diverse range in the "In/Outdoor Ambience" sector

Be it decorative ceramics or water technology in perfection - the "In/Outdoor-Ambience" sector also had numerous new products and innovations to offer. Here the range extended from intelligent filter systems through to water games using PDA control up to light-design solutions for the garden pond. "The sector's multipliers were here", said one exhibitor. A natural and romantic approach was one trend theme in the decorative sector. Here the suppliers presented articles in stone design - in some cases even with the corresponding haptic feel - in warm colours and romantic designs. As before, opulent, large plant pots and vessels create that "Mediterranean Feeling" in the garden and on the patio. But loud colours and modern plastics now also have their firm place in the greenery sector. Flower boxes in the mix-and-match system, colourful flower pots and translucent flower tubs with illumination were on display. And: not only outdoor kitchens and barbecues, but also the "set table" is taking up its place outdoors. Glass, porcelain, crockery and cutlery are now also available as separate outdoor collections.

spoga+gafa Cologne 2008 in figures

At spoga+gafa Cologne 2008, 2,155 (2,315) companies from 57 (64) countries, 77 (77) % of them from abroad, participated in gross exhibition space of 290,600 (2006: 289.600) m². They included 502 (548) exhibitors and 11 (24) additionally-represented companies from Germany as well as 1,653 (1,767) exhibitors and 72 (100) additionally represented companies from abroad. Including estimates for the last day of the fair, spoga+gafa 2008 and spoga horse (Autumn) registered 38,600 admissions (48,168) plus the users of the spoga horse combined admission tickets as well as

invited guests. The foreign share of trade visitors was 55 (49) percent from 100 (127) countries.*

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* All figures have been compiled according to the guidelines set by the Society for Voluntary Control of Fair and Exhibition Statistics (Gesellschaft zur Freiwilligen Kontrolle -FKM) and are subject to control by an auditor (www.fkm.de).

In 2009, spoga will be held in Cologne from Sunday, 30th August, to Tuesday, 1st September.

What the exhibitors said:

Jürgen Hörmann, CEO Wolf-Garten

"gafa 2008 was a complete success for WOLF-Garten. On all three days we had more trade visitors than ever before on our stand in Hall 7 and in the open grounds. Correspondingly, a large number of qualified trade discussions were held, in which particularly the range of new products and innovations, and here especially the garden watering products, met with keen interest from the trade partners. WOLF-Garten closed gafa 2008 with a very good feeling for the 2009 season. The aim now is to also take a look ahead to gafa in the future and overcome the critical phase of recent months. New ideas are required and with it the creativity both from Koelnmesse, the manufacturers and the associations. WOLF-Garten will, as announced, also be involved in seizing the initiative to reach an optimum solution here for all concerned."

John Kejlhof, Group Managing Director CEO, ScanCom International A/S:

"It has been a very good show for us. This is the time to show our customers the new things for the season in 2010. We used the exhibition to meet and socialize with our customers and to finalize the orders that we have already been placing. In August/September our customers know the season by now and can correct their orders. We met all the visitors we have expected."

Roland Stoiber, Sales and Marketing Manager International MBM

"The visitor frequency was outstanding, there was a lot happening, right from the first hour. Our new products and innovations in every category were very well received. On Monday there was a very good frequency at the Contract Workshop, Contract is a strong theme. A lot of international visitors were here. The support from Koelnmesse was really excellent in all sectors."

Ralf Gaa, Executive Director SABO-Maschinenfabrik GmbH A John Deere Company

"We are very satisfied with the general conditions. We had a very good day on Sunday. Although there were fewer visitors than two years ago, we still had many good discussions. The visit to spoga+gafa has been worthwhile for us. In an outstanding presentation we showed the complete solution for dealers aimed at helping them to further develop their business. In the right framework we were able to familiarize our customers with our dealer development stand, further solutions for dealers, lawn seeds and fertilizers, "Dealernet/Spare Parts" and the Sabo Vertragspartnergemeinschaft (SVG) advisory councils."

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Günther Seuren, Executive Director Landmann-Peiga

"We are absolutely satisfied. There were fewer visitors, but in this connection the quality was however at a high level comparable with that of the last event. We expect to see all our relevant customers by the end of the fair. The share of foreign visitors has risen. Everyone of significance in the sector - on both the exhibitors' and visitors' side - was here. Our forecast for 2009: definitely strained and tense due to the increased raw materials prices. The price trend is upwards, a trend which cannot be halted."

Ansgar Paul, Executive Director Oase

"Our products were very well received, the customers were impressed. All the multipliers were there. Overall we are satisfied - it was a good fair."

Ralf Kindermann, Business Division Manager Freizeitmöbel und Kind+Spiel

"On Sunday we had a strong day with high visitor frequency. On Sunday we already reached almost all the German appointed dealers, but overall had a good mixture of national and international customers. In general, we showed our new products and trends to qualified contacts. On Monday we had more time, which we also needed for the more intensive discussions with chain store representatives, the large-volume and large retail space trade. In general, garden furniture has a high significance in our end-customers' purchasing budget. Kettler was able to assert itself well with its strategy, especially aimed at serving the medium-price segment."

Oliviano Spadotto, President Claber Spa:

"It has been a good experience. It was a good decision to come to spoga+gafa. We have met a lot of new customers even from the Far East or the Soviet Countries. Our suggestion would be to have one day more for the show."

Jan Witt, Fiskars Brands Germany GmbH

"We had strong Sunday and a strong Monday, on the last day it slacked off a little."

We had a very large number of visitors coming to see our new products, both for Fiskars as well as Ebert/Werga. We had many international customers on our stand. Our strategy of offering forward-looking products has been confirmed."

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Axel Schröder, Marketing Director/Manager Scheurich:

"The fair went outstandingly well. We had many international customers. The quality of the customers was very high. The only disappointing aspect was the absence of private garden centres. We were expecting much more here. There were also very few customers from the USA. "

Hans-Jürgen Herr, Executive Director Weber-Stephen Deutschland:

"The fair was very successful for us. Our concepts were well received. In addition to the German specialist dealers, we were able to make many international contacts - especially here in Central and Eastern Europe. We had at least as many customers and high-quality discussions as at the last event and are optimistic for 2009."

Digital Press Service

You will find the Final Report, further press releases, the lists of new products/innovations, the exhibitors' press pigeon holes as well as the image database containing photo material and logo on the Internet at (<http://www.spogagafa.com>) in the "For the press" section.