

Sustainability

Sustainability in the spotlight

As a global leader in the solar industry, Meyer Burger's unique, comprehensive technology directly supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal No. 7: Affordable and Clean Energy. Its innovative range of products, systems, and services, including processes for manufacturing solar cells and modules, are essential elements of the photovoltaic value chain.

Advancing sustainable innovation

Over the last decade, Meyer Burger has focused its investments in research and development, ensuring its technology leadership in the PV equipment area. By continuously improving the energy efficiency of its photovoltaic (PV) technologies, it has reduced overall manufacturing costs and the production footprint, allowing customers to achieve the lowest total cost of ownership in the photovoltaic industry. These pioneering and sustainable solutions have been developed in close cooperation with both customers and renowned research institutions.

In 2019, Meyer Burger delivered its new 600 MW heterojunction (HJT)/SmartWire connection technology production line to a large customer. Only 10 months after ordering, the customer started its mass production of highly efficient solar modules. This new generation of modules features the world's most powerful 60-cell solar panels and best-in-class power output of up to 380 Wp—a huge improvement over conventional models.

Meyer Burger also entered a strategic partnership with Oxford Photovoltaics Limited (Oxford PV) and signed an exclusive cooperation agreement to advance the technology for the mass production of perovskite on silicon heterojunction tandem cells. This cooperation ideally combines Oxford PV's innovative tandem cell technology and Meyer Burger's HJT technology as well as expertise in industrializing highly efficient PV processes. It will accelerate the industrialization of perovskite HJT tandem solar cells and define the pace for the development of this technology.

Major strategic reorientation

Over the last few years, the Passivated Emitter and Rear Cell (PERC) technology, originally established by Meyer Burger, became a standard in solar cell production. As a result, a large number of competitors and competing products appeared in the market, particularly in China—Meyer Burger's largest and most important market. Reacting to these evolved market conditions, Meyer Burger shifted its strategy significantly: it turned away from the low-margin bulk business and concentrates on the marketing of its proprietary HJT/SmartWire connection technologies as well as the promising next generation of Perovskite cell technology. In this field, Meyer Burger has a clear advantage over its competitors due to its HJT/SmartWire connection technologies. With this, Meyer Burger can support companies around the world in constructing their own photovoltaic production lines to produce highly efficient solar modules that outmatch all standard modules in performance and output. As part of this major strategic reorientation, Meyer Burger concentrated its PV-business activities and production at its German site in Hohenstein-Ernstthal. However, the site in Thun remained the headquarters and hosts the Research & Development Team for the SmartWire connection technologies.

Focus on customer satisfaction

Photovoltaics is Meyer Burger's core business, featuring a unique and comprehensive portfolio of technologies and equipment, including the manufacturing and interconnection of solar cells. This portfolio is optimally complemented with Meyer Burger's service offering, which plays an important role in fulfilling the full spectrum of customer needs.

Proximity to customers

Close proximity to customers ensures that Meyer Burger maintains an open dialogue and has access to specific knowledge of customer needs, allowing the company to continuously improve its services and products. Customer feedback is received on a daily basis through personal contact and is systematically documented so the relevant teams can follow up effectively. In 2019, customer feedback helped Meyer Burger successfully increase productivity. For example, specific customer feedback prompted an extension of Meyer Burger's service offering from purely remote support to production and service assistance. In addition, personal contact with existing and potential customers at trade fairs provides insights into current and future needs and highlights customers' interest in Meyer Burger's development and long-term strategy. In the reporting year, no systematic global customer survey across all product and service categories was carried out, but an increased number of customer visits led to an overall improvement in customer satisfaction.

Product safety and customer training

Ensuring the health and safety of employees and customers that are using Meyer Burger's technologies and solutions is a precondition for the company's long-term success. All systems and machines are manufactured in compliance with the applicable international and national laws, guidelines, and standards and are thoroughly checked before customer delivery as part of the regular quality management process. In addition, safety manuals, checklists, risk assessments, inspections, and safety reviews ensure that all internal and external rules that protect the health and safety of customers are fulfilled. Customers receive extensive technical documentation, user instructions, and optimal support through the global service organisation.

Once installed, comprehensive customer training programs ensure that the production equipment and systems are used properly and function reliably. On-site handling and maintenance trainings are mandatory before any machine starts operating. Upon request, customised, in-depth product and technology training is also available at Meyer Burger sites and on the customer's premises. All trainings are reviewed through a written evaluation and customers can access helplines and online support. In 2019, the Hohenstein-Ernstthal site updated online trainings and safety regulations as well as documentation and video trainings regarding service safety.

Work Environment

After production activities were discontinued in Thun, all production activities were concentrated in Hohenstein-Ernstthal in Germany. Thun continues to serve as the corporate headquarters and as the R&D center for SmartWire connection technology. The strategic product focus continues to be on HJT/SmartWire connection technology and the promising next generation of PV-cell and module technologies. Given this geographic reorientation, the number of employees in Thun further decreased, from 240 to 82. In Hohenstein-Ernstthal, employee headcount was reduced by roughly five percent, from 398 to 378.

Transformation in Thun

The restructuring process in Thun took place according to plan. In April 2019, Meyer Burger sold its wafering equipment and service business for photovoltaic and special materials to Precision Surfacing Solutions (PSS), a global provider of installations and services for surface refinements. With this transaction, essential parts of Meyer Burger's manufacturing installations in Thun were taken over by PSS and about 100 employees working on the wafer technology relocated to PSS.

Training and education

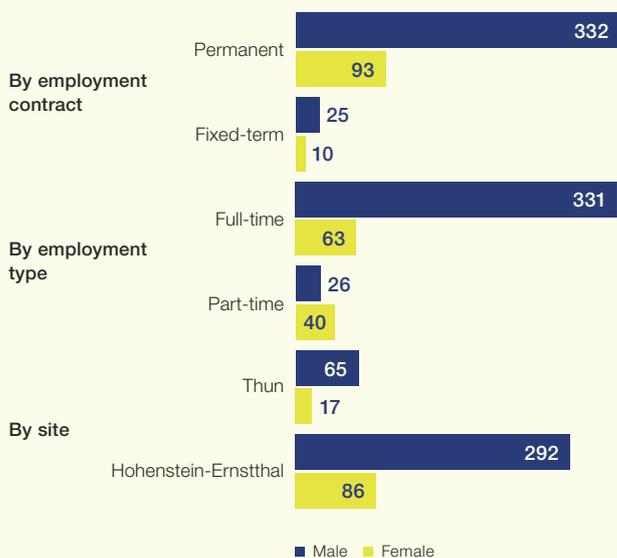
Faced with challenging situations over the last few years and major transformations affecting its employees, Meyer Burger remains convinced of the importance of investing in motivated and responsible employees to strengthen the corporate culture and support long-term economic success. The company not only invests in its current employees but is also committed to filling all apprenticeship positions with promising young talent in order to secure the next generation of skilled workers. To inspire the interest of students and future apprentices, Meyer Burger is increasing its brand awareness.

In addition to recruiting young talent, Meyer Burger is also proactively planning for the succession of experienced, long-standing employees, by enabling younger employees to build know-how and keep up with the latest technological developments to successfully face future challenges. Meyer Burger supports the professional development of its employees with diverse offerings. However, due to the recent restructuring programmes, the training and education measures for employees in Thun are focused on corporate headquarters functions. Once the restructuring ends, Meyer Burger will re-evaluate its training and educational offerings at this site.

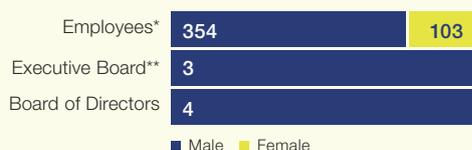
Employee ratios

Employee headcount per 31 December 2019 at the Thun and Hohenstein-Ernstthal sites*

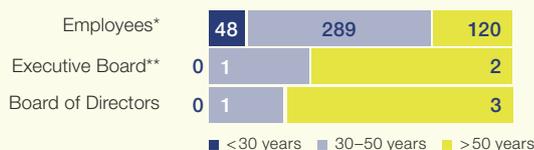
* Excluding apprentices, trainees, interns, and agency/lease workers.



Employees by gender



Employees by age group



** Only includes the Executive Board of the Meyer Burger Group. Members of the executive management at the Hohenstein-Ernstthal site are counted as permanent employees.

In Hohenstein-Ernstthal, managers can participate in external coaching programs to improve their leadership skills. Meyer Burger also offers weekly English language lessons for all employees, which are very popular. In 2019, two employees started long-term certification programs in accounting and electrical engineering. In addition, new crane and forklift operators have been trained in several areas and divisions, allowing the company to deploy employees in a more versatile manner. Implementation and results of all training measures are reviewed regularly through surveys. In 2019, 3,680 hours (2018: 3,805) were invested in training and education at Hohenstein-Ernstthal.

Currently, Meyer Burger employs ten apprentices in Hohenstein-Ernstthal. They receive training in areas such as mechatronics, electronics, industrial mechanics, and commercial professions. In addition, ten working students were employed in diverse departments such as sourcing, human resources, and global sales. Three out of four apprentices in Hohenstein-Ernstthal who finished their education in 2019 were able to continue working for Meyer Burger in Germany.

All employees discuss their further education and personal development during the yearly appraisal interviews. Goals and development plans are discussed together with their direct supervisors. The goals are reviewed mid-year and year-end.

Key figures occupational health and safety (per 100 FTEs)*

	Overall	Thun	Hohenstein-Ernstthal
Injury rate	0.8	1.8	0.6
Cases of occupational illness	0.0	0.0	0.0
Days missed (due to injuries/occupational illness)	4.6	4.4	4.7
Days of absence	948.4	513.7	1 085.1

* Rates calculated using 200,000 working hours (≈ 100 FTEs). There were no fatalities.

Respectful collaboration and transparent information

The diversity of Meyer Burger's workforce directly reflects its diverse customer base. Meyer Burger considers this one of its main assets. The Code of Conduct states clearly that the company does not tolerate any form of discrimination of employees or other stakeholders due to their gender, origin, age, colour, culture, religion, marital status, political or other opinions, sexual orientation, or disability. All employees are treated fairly and equally and no form of sexual or other harassment is tolerated in the workplace. These principles of equal treatment also apply to access to training and education. The privacy and personal integrity of each employee is guaranteed. As in previous years, no cases of discrimination were reported in 2019.

All employees received an electronic or printed copy of the current Code of Conduct and Meyer Burger has a clear process in place to deal with alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. Employees can report any violations to their direct supervisor, the compliance officer, the human resources department, or the staff association and employee representation. In Hohenstein-Ernstthal, complaints can be addressed to the head of the legal department or the direct supervisor.

In times of transformation, an active and collaborative information exchange within the company is essential. In Thun in particular, several informative meetings and newsletters helped employees keep up with the current status of the restructuring program. Employees also continued to be supported by collective bargaining agreements. In Thun, the Swissmem collective employment agreement is in place; in Hohenstein-Ernstthal all employees are part of the internal works agreement (GRI 102-41).

The employee fluctuation rate at Hohenstein-Ernstthal, which is calculated for permanent employees and includes only notices given by employees, was 1.3%. For the Thun site, the fluctuation rate cannot be compared to previous years in a meaningful way, given the significant restructuring of the workforce in the reporting year. No employee survey focusing on employee satisfaction was conducted in 2019.

Occupational health and safety

Employees are Meyer Burger's most important resource. Thus, ensuring safe work environments and the health and safety of each employee are of the highest importance. The company adheres to its proven operating process: a careful analysis of operating procedures and employee training to minimise risk and achieve high levels of process safety. New employees are informed and trained extensively about corporate security regulations and processes. In addition, all employees are obliged to report potential risks. Meyer Burger complies with all local work and safety directives at all its sites. However, Meyer Burger did not renew the occupational health and safety certifications at its Swiss sites, given the discontinuation of production activities. At Hohenstein-Ernstthal, the OHSAS 18001 certification was not renewed, since the site started following the new norm DIN ISO 45001.

In Hohenstein-Ernstthal, the thorough implementation of health and safety measures in 2019 contributed to further reducing the number of occupational accidents to two cases. The same number of work-related accidents occurred at the Thun site.

Environmental protection

Since increasing the energy efficiency of solar cells and modules helps customers make a positive environmental impact, sustainable development is literally built into Meyer Burger's innovative products and technologies. To address its own environmental footprint, the company continuously improves resource use and energy efficiency at its technology and production sites.

Resource-efficient systems and production equipment

Solar energy is affordable, clean, and available in unlimited quantities. It therefore can decrease the effects of global warming over the long term. Meyer Burger focuses on the ongoing improvement of its solar energy technologies to maintain its leading position in the industry and improve the ecological impact of its business activities, products, and services.

Meyer Burger pursues a double goal: to increase the energy efficiency of solar cells and modules while simultaneously offering its customers the lowest total cost of ownership. As innovation is key to achieving these goals, Meyer Burger invests in new technologies that permanently lower the cost per kilowatt hour of solar energy. In October 2019, the first mass production of HJT/SmartWire Solar Modules on Meyer Burger core equipment started at the site of its customer REC Group in Singapore.

The consistent further development of highly productive equipment reduces the use of resources such as energy, cooling water, and process and operation gas, as well as lowering emissions per solar module. Resource use in the area of indium tin oxide (ITO) coating was reduced by 25%, while the use of silver was continuously minimised due to technological improvements.

Continuously improving its own operations

Meyer Burger follows a comprehensive approach to energy and resource efficiency. It applies not only to the systems and production equipment, but also to every step of internal operations. The environmental management system organises the company's activities in a systematic and well-documented manner. Hohenstein-Ernstthal is ISO 9001 certified and has an ISO 50001 certified energy management system in place. At this site, production takes place in an energy-efficient building that was constructed according to the latest environmental standards. A small part of the electricity is generated by photovoltaic equipment and fed into the public grid. In addition, employees have access to an electric vehicle and charging station.

In 2019, further conversions from conventional to energy-saving LED lighting and optimisations in the creation of compressed air were implemented. In the selection of new installations, energy efficiency criteria are considered and whenever possible the most efficient installations are preferred.

Additional measures to improve the environmental footprint at Hohenstein-Ernstthal included the switch to recycled paper towels and toilet paper. By doing so, Meyer Burger avoided roughly 940kg CO₂, the equivalent of saving 14 mid-sized trees. Waste was further separated and now features recycling categories for styrofoam and rubber hoses, among others. However, due to the lack of adequate disposal options, plastics could not be separated and recycled. Nevertheless, the proportion of total mixed waste (not reused or recycled) as part of the site's total waste generation was reduced again from 12% to 10.4%. The objective of achieving below 10% mixed waste generation remains in place.

Meyer Burger emphasises the importance of following all applicable legal requirements. In 2019, no fines or non-monetary penalties were imposed for non-compliance with environmental laws.

Meyer Burger environmental indicators¹

	2019	2018	2017
Energy consumption [MWh]	9395	10199	10597
Electricity²	6456	7194	7645
Heating and cooling	2186	2234	2265
Total fuels for vehicles	753	772	687
Diesel	683	706	620
Petrol	61	63	54
LPG/propane	8	3	13
Total CO₂ emissions [tonnes of CO₂ equivalents]³	5152	5147	5262
Scope 1	660	677	660
Fuels for heating and cooling	460	472	477
Fuels for vehicles	200	205	182
Scope 2 (electricity)⁴	2827	3150	3348
Scope 3 (business travel)	1665	1319	1254
Water use [m³]⁵	13958	21090	13922
Drinking water/fresh water ⁶	13958	21090	13922
Ground water	–	–	–
Waste water [m³]⁵	10057	14962	8579
Municipal sewage treatment plant ⁷	10057	14962	8579
Waste water treatment by third party	–	–	–
Waste [tonnes]			
Non-hazardous waste	126	113	150
Residual waste to incineration	26	32	49
Composting	–	–	15
Wood (burning)	100	81	86
Recycling	127	103	131
Paper and cardboard	36	26	49
Glass	1	0.1	0.1
Metal (mainly aluminum, copper, iron, steel)	81	72	74
Plastic	9	5	9
Special waste	474	613	699
Batteries (recycling)	<0.001	–	0.2
Waste electrical and electronic equipment (recycling)	1	3	1
Oils, fats, chemicals (mainly aqueous solutions)	472	597	696
Hazardous waste (mainly coolants and slurries)	0.2	13	2

¹ Due to the termination of production activities at the Thun site, the environmental data scope is limited to Meyer Burger's Hohenstein-Ernstthal site.

² PV generated electricity at the Hohenstein-Ernstthal site is directly fed into the grid (2019/2018/2017: 17/18/17 MWh).

³ Emission categories according to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. Scope 1: combustion in own facilities/vehicles; Scope 2: purchased electricity; Scope 3: third-party services.

⁴ The emissions related to purchased electricity (Scope 2) were calculated using the "location-based approach" of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Scope 2 Guidance.

⁵ In 2019, water use and wastewater generation normalised again after higher activity in the wet chemical processing plant and the installation of an additional reverse osmosis plant caused a sharp increase in 2018.

⁶ The previous report contained an estimated value for 2018. The volume of drinking water / fresh water has thus been restated for 2018.

⁷ The value for 2019 is estimated. The actual value can only be determined after publication of this report. The previous report contained an estimated value for 2018. The volume of wastewater treated by municipal sewage treatment plants has thus been restated for 2018.

Economic and Social Contribution

In Hohenstein-Ernstthal, Meyer Burger is an important employer, training company, and partner for local suppliers. As the company was equally prominent in Thun, the discontinuation of production presented major challenges for the local employees. However, the divestment of the photovoltaic and specialised materials (for example, semiconductor and sapphire glass industries), wafering equipment, and service business to Precision Surfacing Solutions made it possible to secure jobs as well as retain technological know-how in Thun.

Local sourcing and efficient supplier management

Reliable and efficient sourcing of materials and goods directly from manufacturers is a key precondition in order to react flexibly to customer demand, particularly in the volatile solar industry. With its efficient supplier management, Meyer Burger can identify, assess, and develop the right partners to provide quality and flexibility, as well as cost and technology potential. Contracts are awarded based on total cost of ownership and include sustainability and corporate responsibility clauses. Meyer Burger uses a self-declaring supplier questionnaire that evaluates users on the implementation of standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, and Social Accountability 8000, as well as standards relating to human rights, ethics, and the company's Code of Conduct. Suppliers must provide corresponding documentation of their efforts in these areas.

The continued adjustments in production and operations in 2019 presented a substantial challenge to sourcing in general. Even though the purchasing volume was reduced due to the market situation, sourcing continued to face increasing complexity.

Goods and services are procured mainly from local manufacturers and suppliers, which are complemented with European and global sources. Whenever possible, local suppliers are preferred to ensure the efficiency and flexibility required in today's markets. For Meyer Burger, local sourcing is defined as taking place within the country of a specific production site. At Hohenstein-Ernstthal, approximately 85% of the purchasing volume was bought from local suppliers.

Compliance

As a globally active and publicly listed company, Meyer Burger ensures that all employees, products, and services fully adhere to applicable international, national, and local laws, regulations, and norms. Meyer Burger's Code of Conduct outlines the company's core values and provides guidance regarding business ethics, compliance, corporate governance, stakeholder engagement, and fostering an encouraging work environment. The Code of Conduct is available in German, English, and Mandarin. In 2019, Meyer Burger executed a web-based compliance training for all employees regarding cyber security and insider trading.

In addition, several steps were taken in 2019 to strengthen the intellectual property (IP) management at Meyer Burger. Employees in Research & Development functions received training on IP law and were included more actively in the assessment of competitors' patents to ensure Meyer Burger's freedom to operate and avoid possible cases of patent infringement. Newly assigned "IP delegates" in Research & Development cooperate closely with the Intellectual Property department and supervise relevant IP assessment tasks. In addition, Meyer Burger started collaborating more closely across sites on questions of IP management. Knowledge is exchanged through regular workshops and meetings under the lead of the Chief Technology Officer.

In 2019, the company was not involved in any legal proceedings on the grounds of anti-competitive conduct, nor did any cases of corruption come to light. There were also no fines or penalties for breaches of laws or regulations in 2019.

Partnerships in the solar industry

Reliability, loyalty, and respect are Meyer Burger's key values within the company and with customers, suppliers, research institutions, governments, and other business partners. Meyer Burger is actively committed to forward-looking energy strategies and smart solar and energy systems. The company is a member of Solar United, the international photovoltaic industry association, Solar Power Europe, the European photovoltaic industry association, and Swissmem. In Germany, Meyer Burger is also a member of the Innovationsverbund Maschinenbau Sachsen.

Information on sustainability reporting

Material topics

Meyer Burger's clear focus on sustainable value creation and development is illustrated by and based on its analysis of material topics. In order to prioritise topics for inclusion in this report, Meyer Burger conducted an internal materiality analysis. During a workshop, senior managers from the Thun and Hohenstein-Ernstthal sites representing the Finance, Production, Marketing, Sales, Customer Service, Quality & Safety, IT, Supply Chain Management, Corporate Communications, and Human Resources departments identified key topics and issues from the company and stakeholder perspectives. Although external stakeholders were not directly involved in the process, management took their existing concerns into account (GRI 102-46). In particular, customer concerns that were identified in communications between Sales, Service teams, and Customer Service were incorporated (GRI 102-43, GRI 102-44). In order to clarify the business model's contribution to sustainable development, the sustainability topics identified during the materiality analysis were reviewed and given a new strategic orientation in 2016. In 2019, no adjustments were made.

In addition to technology leadership and profitability, decreasing the cost of solar energy and developing resource-efficient products and services are top priorities. The materiality matrix depicts the relevance of topics from both a stakeholder perspective (vertical axis) and from the company's perspective (horizontal axis) and is reviewed regularly. Meyer Burger has been reporting according to the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) since 2011 and according to the GRI Standards since 2017. A full list of applicable GRI topics and disclosures can be found in the GRI content index, starting on page 21 of this report.

The main stakeholders who significantly influence or are influenced by the business success of Meyer Burger include customers, employees, shareholders, regional authorities, suppliers, and the public (GRI 102-40, GRI 102-42).

Materiality matrix (GRI 102-47)



Reporting practice

Sustainability is an integral part of business success at Meyer Burger. For this reason, the company reports on sustainability topics every year in its annual report. The last report, covering fiscal year 2018, was published in March 2019. The current report covers the fiscal year 2019, which runs from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. This report has been prepared in accordance with the GRI Standards: “Core” option. The contents of the sustainability chapter have not been externally validated. There were no significant changes regarding material topics and topic boundaries (GRI 102-49). Retrospective adjustments have been made to the corresponding data to allow better comparability and are indicated on the respective page of the report (GRI 102-48). The scope of consolidation can be found on page 64 of this annual report (GRI 102-45). Due to the discontinuation of production in Thun, data on environmental performance is only disclosed for the Hohenstein-Ernstthal site.

→ For all questions relating to the sustainability report, please contact Nicole Borel, +41 (0)33 221 28 34, nicole.borel@meyerburger.com.

GRI Content Index

		Pages/Reference
GRI 101: 2016	Foundation	
GRI 102: 2016	General Disclosures	
	Organisational Profile	
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For the Materiality Disclosures Service, the GRI Services team reviewed that the GRI content index is clearly presented and the references for Disclosures 102-40 to 102-49 align with appropriate sections in the body of the report.

		Pages/Reference	Reason for Omission
GRI 200	Economic Topics		
GRI 201: 2016	Economic Performance		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	6–11	
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GRI 203: 2016	Indirect Economic Impacts		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	18	
203-1	Infrastructure investments and services supported		Information unavailable
GRI 204: 2016	Procurement Practices		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	18	
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GRI 205: 2016	Anti-corruption		
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GRI 206: 2016	Anti-competitive Behavior		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	18	
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GRI 300	Environmental Topics		
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GRI 305: 2016	Emissions		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	16	
305-1	Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions	17	
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305-3	Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions	17	
GRI 306: 2016	Effluents and Waste		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	16	
306-1	Water discharge by quality and destination	17	
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GRI 307: 2016	Environmental Compliance		
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		Pages/Reference	Reason for Omission
GRI 400	Social Topics		
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403-2	Types of injury and rates of injury, occupational diseases, lost days, and absenteeism, and number of work-related fatalities	14	
GRI 404: 2016	Training and Education		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	13	
404-1	Average hours of training per year per employee	14	
404-2	Programs for upgrading employee skills and transition assistance programs	13-14	
404-3	Percentage of employees receiving regular performance and career development reviews	14	
GRI 405: 2016	Diversity and Equal Opportunity		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	15	
405-1	Diversity of governance bodies and employees	14	
GRI 406: 2016	Non-Discrimination		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	15	
406-1	Incidents of discrimination and corrective actions taken	15	
GRI 407: 2016	Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	15	
407-1	Operations and suppliers in which the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining may be at risk		Not applicable*
GRI 416: 2016	Customer Health and Safety		
GRI 103: 2016 103-1/103-2/103-3	Management approach	13	
416-1	Assessment of the health and safety impacts of product and service categories	13	
GRI 417: 2016	Marketing and Labeling		
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GRI 419: 2016	Socioeconomic Compliance		
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419-1	Non-compliance with laws and regulations in the social and economic area	18	

* The GRI reporting scope includes the sites in Hohenstein-Ernstthal (Germany) and Thun (Switzerland).