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Biopolymer sustains Copenhagen Climate Change Conference

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While delegates from 192 nations are working at the UN Climate Change Conference this week and next in Copenhagen, Denmark, they will be standing on, eating from, and looking at a variety of existing applications of biopolymer, thanks to the efforts of biopolymer maker NatureWorks and its working partners. And after the event, the biopolymer items will be converted back to the material's building block feedstock.

Natureworks (Minnetonka, MN) saw the Copenhagen climate summit as a critical platform for showcasing its Ingeo materials, which are based on plants rather than oil, so it got involved. As a result, some 215,000 ft^2 (20,000m^2) of public space in the Bella Center, the Conference meeting place, is carpeted with Sommer Needlepunch's Eco2punch made from Natureworks' Ingeo. The resulting reduction in greenhouse gas from that alone is comparable to 68,869 miles of driving an average car.

The U.S.-made Ingeo material also is being featured in a runway show, part of the Nordic Fashion Industry's sustainability summit, with 20 designers in competing for honors. Guest will be served using Ingeo plates, cups, and cutlery, in addition to walking on the Ingeo carpet. Also, a gallery of Ingeo consumer products will help support a panel discussion on how biotechnology applications can help mitigate global climate change.

Saving the best for last, at least from a polymer industry point of view, the Belgian company Galactic will collect the Ingeo carpet and service items, and, using its Loopla process, convert them back to virgin lactic acid, the building block for the Ingeo biopolymer.

NatureWorks CEO Marc Verbruggen commented, "What's exciting to us is that our partners' products and the processes showcased in Copenhagen are not things developed specially for this important environment conference, but rather represent just a sampling of products that are available today. These products are in demand not only because are they are good for the environment, but also because they are appealing, perform well, and offer unique new end-of-life options after their use."