

## **Eco-friendly blanket and sheet products from surface peat**

Karvia-based Konto Ltd is in the start-up phase of its operations. The company manufactures blankets, sheets and shape-pressed products from natural fibres. Applications include oil absorption, insulation, acoustics and various shape-pressed product requirements. The project allowed the company to make the machinery investments required for starting operations.

The company's development work on products manufactured from natural fibres was a long-term process, during which the examination of various natural fibres revealed the superior properties of surface peat.

"Depending on how it has been treated, surface peat is ideal for absorption and insulation. The mouldability and durability of surface peat fibres are also in a class of their own. By optimising these properties we have been able to develop new, ecological products for oil absorption, insulation, acoustics, and shape-pressed product applications," says Konto Ltd Research and Development Manager Heikki Rantanen.

The company has also worked hard on product development.

"The starting point for our product development has been customer-orientation; we have tested our products with customers of different product groups as part of their processes," comments Konto Ltd Marketing Manager Piia Alatalo.

### **Positive impact on rural environment**

Preliminary testing results on peat fibres reveal their competitiveness compared to existing products. The greatest advantage over comparable products is that surface peat – a renewable, recyclable and safe natural fibre – is environmentally friendly.

"Industrial production guarantees the uniform quality of our peat fibre products. We have also taken environmental issues into consideration in our production. For example, all residual material is reused at the plant. This means we do not produce any waste," Rantanen says.

From the point of view of raw material availability the company's location at Karvia is excellent, as Karvia and the surrounding municipalities are well-known peat producers. The investment made it possible for the company to start operations and hire staff. The launch of the operations of Konto Ltd creates jobs and attracts investments and expertise to the area.

### **The project was nominated for rural innovation of the year in the Best Practices 2010 competition.**

Text: Titta Strömberg