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## DBU honours innovators in the field of environmental protection who offer solutions for the future

The German Environmental Prize was awarded to soil researcher Prof. Dr. Ingrid Kögel-Knabner and entrepreneur Reinhard Schneider

**Mannheim. The German Environmental Foundation (DBU) has awarded the German Environmental Prize for the 27th time. Today in Mannheim, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the Head of the Board of Trustees of the DBU and Parliamentary State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, presented this prize to soil researcher Prof. Dr. Ingrid Kögel-Knabner (60, Technical University of Munich) and entrepreneur Reinhard Schneider (51, Mainz). With his company Werner & Mertz, Schneider is dedicated to comprehensive sustainability at every stage of production in the laundry detergent and cleaning product industry. The prize has a total remuneration of EUR 500,000 and is the most prestigious independent environmental prize in Europe. The DBU honoured the prize winners as innovators in the field of environmental protection who offer solutions for the enormous ecological challenges we face at present. Sustainable development demands fundamental economic, political and technological change processes at all levels.**

*Focussing on the central role played by soil as an environmental medium*

The DBU emphasized that Dr. Kögel-Knabner, as one of the most renowned and influential soil scientists and researchers in the world, has succeeded in shining a light on the central role played by the environmental medium of soil, which is often "fatally underestimated" in terms of importance compared to air and water. She has provided us with answers to the question of how soil can be used for long-term carbon storage. After all, soil is incredibly important not only for the climate but also for preventing climate change. Dr. Kögel-Knabner's work is also important for nutrient dynamics, global food security, soil conservation and biodiversity. Her findings on quality and control mechanisms for stabilizing loam in soil have made it possible to monitor environmental changes in the soil via a

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modified management system, detect changes early on, and take preventive measures.

#### *Making ecological products sustainable for the mass market*

With his comprehensive corporate sustainability strategy and high level of personal dedication, Schneider has paved the way for environmental standards to be established at the highest level across an entire economic sector. He has consistently ensured that green products appeal to the majority of consumers on the mass market, pursues sustainability in his corporate decision-making and, in this way, earns the trust of the consumer. With countless initiatives for environmental protection and sustainable development, he has broken new ground: consistent recycling of used plastics, for example from household recycling, for new packaging, printing labels in an environmentally- and health-friendly manner, using plant oils from Germany for his laundry detergent and cleaning products rather than controversial palm kernel oil from tropical regions, voluntarily subjecting the company to environmental audits in accordance with the guidelines of the European Union – the approach to sustainability pursued by the company is “visible on a national and international level”.

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**IPTC-compliant photos are available for publication free of charge at [www.dbu.de](http://www.dbu.de)**

We use generic masculine pronouns to make our texts easier to read.

**Background information:** With the German Environmental Prize, which is being awarded in 2019 for the 27th time, the German Environmental Foundation (DBU) recognizes the achievements of persons who have contributed to the protection and conservation of the environment in an exemplary way, or who will contribute to environmental relief in Germany in the future. The prize – which is independent and, with a remuneration of EUR 500,000, the largest prize of its kind in Europe – can be awarded for projects and individual measures, as well as to honour an individual’s lifetime achievements. Candidates for the German Environmental Prize are nominated to the DBU by groups such as employer’s associations and labour unions, churches, environmental organisations and nature conservancies, scientific associations and research councils, as well as media, trade and commercial associations. Individuals may not nominate themselves. A jury of independent, prominent experts from the fields of industry, science and technology as well as from various societal organisations is selected by the DBU Board of Trustees and makes a recommendation on who they feel should be awarded the prize for that year. The DBU Board of Trustees then makes the final decision. For more information on the 2019 prize winners, please see: [https://www.dbu.de/123artikel38389\\_2442.html](https://www.dbu.de/123artikel38389_2442.html)