

Economic Minister Panter Visits Bell Headquarters in Leipzig

Saxony's Minister of Economic Affairs learns about investment plans and AI-powered fragrance development at one of the region's oldest manufacturing companies

Leipzig, 30 April 2026 – Saxony's Minister of Economic Affairs Dirk Panter visited fragrance and flavour manufacturer Bell Flavors & Fragrances in Leipzig on Thursday. During a tour of production, research, and development facilities, Panter gained insight into a company that has been manufacturing at the site for nearly 200 years and serves international markets from its Leipzig base. The visit centred on a planned major investment in a new fragrance production facility and the use of artificial intelligence in product development.

Panter is already familiar with the company: approximately one year ago, he visited Bell's plant in Sri City, India, as part of a Saxon trade delegation. In Miltitz, in western Leipzig, he now saw the company's main site, where the majority of its value creation takes place.

A Saxon Mid-Sized Company with Global Reach

Bell develops and manufactures flavours, fragrances, and botanical extracts on its 200,000-square-metre site in Leipzig-Miltitz. No other manufacturer in eastern Germany combines all of these capabilities together with proprietary aroma chemical production under one roof. Its products are found in food, beverages, cosmetics, and household care – many of them in branded consumer goods used daily in millions of homes.

Around 340 employees work at the site, which also serves as the headquarters for the Europe, Middle East, Africa, and India (EMEAI) business region. Each year, approximately 5,000 metric tonnes of finished products leave the facility.

AI in Fragrance Development: Research with Saxon Universities


A key focus of the visit was Bell's research activities. In collaboration with the University of Leipzig, the company is exploring how artificial intelligence can support fragrance development – from predicting sensory properties to accelerating development cycles. A Bell employee is pursuing a doctoral degree as part of the project at the university's Faculty of Chemistry. Additional research partnerships with Saxon universities are in preparation.

"The fragrance and flavour industry has traditionally relied heavily on experience. With AI, we are opening up a new dimension: we can develop faster, more precisely, and more sustainably. Building this expertise together with Saxon universities strengthens both sides," says Holger Wetzler, CEO of Bell EMEAI.

Panter was impressed: "When a mid-sized company with nearly 200 years of experience begins using AI to advance its products, that sends a signal far beyond the industry. This is exactly the kind of connection between industrial expertise and cutting-edge technology that defines Saxony as a hub for innovation."

Investment in New Fragrance Production: Commitment with Conditions

Bell is planning the construction of a new fragrance production facility in Miltitz. The plant is designed to be modular and highly automated, incorporating heat recovery systems and energy-efficient process



technology. In the long term, the site's production capacity for liquid fragrances would triple. A feasibility study has been completed. The company's medium-term revenue target exceeds 100 million euros, with a significant share to be generated at the Leipzig site.

"We want to make this investment in Saxony – deliberately and with conviction. But manufacturing in Germany is expensive: energy, labour, levies. We operate internationally and have locations where the same facility could be built at lower cost. For this project to happen here, we need a clear funding perspective and reliable conditions from the state government," says Wetzler. The project launch is currently on hold due to unresolved funding conditions.

Nearly 200 Years of Industrial History in Saxony

The site's history dates back to 1829, when predecessor company Schimmel & Co. pioneered industrial fragrance and flavour production in Leipzig. Since privatisation in 1993, Bell has reacquired the entire historic grounds and progressively modernised the site. In 2029, the company will celebrate its 200th anniversary.

About Bell Flavors & Fragrances EMEAI:

Bell Flavors & Fragrances EMEAI is a leading supplier of flavours, fragrances, botanical extracts and ingredient specialities to the beverage and food industry, as well as the household care and personal care industry. Based in Leipzig, Germany, the company manages sales offices throughout Europe, the Middle East and Vietnam, as well as a manufacturing facility in India. Bell EMEAI operates as an independent company of Bell Flavors & Fragrances Inc., headquartered in Northbrook, Illinois, with offices in the United States, Canada, Mexico, China, Brazil and Singapore.

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