Research Project: Grease deficiency
Avoidance of starved lubrication in grease-sealing rotary shaft seals
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Motivation
When sealing greases, starved lubrication of the sealing system often occurs. The emergence of and possibilities for avoiding this starved lubrication were investigated in the grease deficiency project.

Background
Grease lubrication is a popular alternative to oil lubrication due to its low maintenance requirements and possible lifetime lubrication. In contrast to oil-lubricated seals, grease-lubricated rotary shaft seals have a significantly higher risk of starved lubrication. Starved lubrication leads to increased abrasive wear and higher thermal stress on the seal, which can lead to premature failure of the sealing system. This can result in a leakage of the lubricant into the environment and a functional failure of the entire product.

Approach
- Detailed rheological examination of 23 commercially available lubricating greases
- Functional tests on the friction torque test rig to evaluate the lubrication condition
- Correlation of grease properties and lubrication condition
- Functional investigations on the origin and influence of operating conditions on starved lubrication
- Structuring of shaft/seal to reduce starved lubrication

Results
- Test and evaluation methodology for assessing starved lubrication in the sealing system
- Estimation of the risk of insufficient lubrication on the basis of grease properties
- Knowledge of the influence of operating conditions on starved lubrication

The IGF project 19930 N/1 of the Forschungskuratorium Maschinenbau e.V. (FKM) was funded by the AiF as a support of the Industrielle Gemeinschaftsforschung (IGF, Industrial Collective Research) by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) on the basis of a decision by the German Bundes tag.