

End-of-waste push welcomed at Tyres Committee



BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of the Netherlands.

Moves next year at the European Commission's Institute for Prospective Technological Studies towards establishing end-of-waste criteria

for end-of-life tyres (ELTs) could be the first step towards lifting a sizeable financial and legislative weight from the shoulders of the tyre recycling sector. BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of the Netherlands said the removal of 'waste' status would create an estimated added value for the business of 'at least Euro 1 billion' over the next decade.

Speaking at the latest Tyres Round-Table in Barcelona, he added: 'At present, end-of-life-tyre-derived products have to be managed as waste even when they are going to be recycled or to be remanufactured. The waste status is a huge burden which adds significant costs over disposal and in many cases acts as a barrier to improved resource efficiency.'

The European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers' Association is seeking end-of-waste status not only for ELT rubber-derived fractions but also for casings suitable for retreading. The organisation's Technical Co-Ordinator for ELTs Jean-Pierre Taverne acknowledged in Barcelona that the process of agreeing end-of-waste criteria may take two years or more, but insisted the potential benefits of a change in status - including an improved functioning of the internal market through the application of simplified, harmonised rules - would merit the effort.

Optimism dimmed beneath 'black clouds'

Plastics

Even arch-optimist Surendra Borad struggled to find positives with which to regale his audience in Barcelona. The BIR Plastics Committee's Chairman perceives 'black clouds on the horizon' for the international plastics scrap trade owing to, in part, strict enforcement of import regulations by the Chinese authorities and the ban on shipments of plastics from Europe to Malaysia. He is also concerned that Chinese import licences are due to expire at the end of December and that any renewal delays have the potential to 'upset the market tremendously'.



Summarising the market background, Mr Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation told the Plastics Round-Table that overall exports from Europe are 'stagnating' while those from the USA fell some 18% in the second quarter of 2012. In India, meanwhile, the recent appreciation of the rupee has helped importers to step up their overseas buying activity. However, he accused India's decision-makers of 'sheer apathy' with regard to the issues of waste and recycling, stating: 'The significance of waste as a resource is not understood well by the Indian bureaucracy.'

The US market report submitted by Michael Schipper of International Alloys spoke of stable recent demand from consumers for common grades such as PET and polyethylene, but also of 'echoes' of late-2011 'when consumers had to cut back on purchases and cancelled orders'. Meanwhile, the European market is generally 'very morose', according to Gregory Cardot of Veolia Propreté in France, on account of bankruptcy filings by plastics companies, solvency difficulties for converters and therefore 'cash-flow problems' for the recyclers themselves.

In Barcelona, Round-Table guest speaker Antonio García Gleiser from the Commercial and Sales Department at Marepa-FCC Ámbito outlined the growth in Spain's plastics collections over recent years such that the national recycling rate 'is reaching 30%' - and is thus in compliance with the EU objective of 25%. However, he added, the plastics and plastics recovery industry must work together to build greater public awareness of the recyclability of this material. Indeed, the recyclability of plastics was underlined via statistics reported by Mr Borad: of the 25.1 million tonnes of plastics scrap generated in Europe last year, materials recycling accounted for 6.4 million tonnes (including 3 million tonnes in Europe and 3.4 million tonnes sent elsewhere for recycling) while a further 8.6 million tonnes was committed to energy recovery.

More uncertainty

In reporting on his home Dutch market and that of Germany, Peter Daalder of Daly Plastics also focused on international movements of plastics

scrap, pointing to the budgeting difficulties created by the inconsistency in freight rates sought by shipping lines which regularly try to force up their prices. The end result for the recycling trade is a heightened level of uncertainty, he argued.

Also on the issue of freight, the guest presentation from Christian Elvers, Business Development Manager at Spain's FMS Logistics, suggested the job of the forwarder has become ever more important: his responsibilities extend beyond simply 'organising transport from A to B' to, for example, checking which shipping lines are options for the different destinations and the equipment needed; and 'value-added services' such as container stuffing, distribution and customs clearance. □



The BIR Plastics Committee's Chairman Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corp.



Guest speaker Christian Elvers of FMS Logistics of Spain.