

Textiles

France's eco-body still taking shape

A prominent topic at recent BIR Textiles Division meetings, the eco-levy scheme in France is edging ever closer to fruition, it was reported at the latest Round-Table meeting in Düsseldorf. Meanwhile, sorters in many parts of the world have spent recent months grappling with the high cost of originals.

Contributions have already begun to flow into France's eco-levy scheme covering new clothes and shoes following the signing in June this year of the decree relating to the formation of the associated eco-body. But while this organisation should be up and running during 2009, some of the crucial details of the levy initiative have yet to be finalised, it was reported to the BIR Textiles Division Round-Table in Düsseldorf by Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex.

As noted at the previous BIR convention in June this year, the levy system is being introduced in a bid to more than double sorted volumes in France over a six-year period - from 61 000 tonnes in 2005 to 130 000 tonnes by 2011. Financial benefits accorded to operators will be based on the weight of material to which value has been added provided that it can be proved that the material has been collected in France. Indeed, work on a system for

monitoring those companies performing the upgrading operations is still being conducted, noted Mr Zerroug. In addition to the aforementioned financial contributions, the eco-levy scheme will also support the sorting sector through: campaigns to make the public aware of what should be put in collection bins; and research and development projects covering, for example, potential new outlets for upgraded materials.

Contract concerns

While market reports delivered to the BIR Textiles Round-Table were somewhat less bleak than those presented at some of the other commodity sessions in Düsseldorf, concern was voiced here too about failures to comply with contractual agreements. The BIR Textiles Division's Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Germany-based Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH insisted: 'People need to adhere to contracts. Compromises must be found. Unethical behaviour ultimately leads to a dead end.' Switching his focus to market developments in the USA, Mr Löwer said there is no lack of originals but sorters are 'still complaining of price levels that are too high'. A significant proportion of US sorting capacity has shifted to other countries such as Canada and Mexico, he noted. In Asia, meanwhile, Japanese sorters are also worried about the high price of originals while South Korea has been importing unsorted textiles from Japan in order to supplement inadequate domestic collection volumes, reported Mr Löwer.



Sorted textiles should be considered products rather than waste because they meet the criteria of having a value and satisfying a demand without inflicting damage on the environment.

Within normal averages

Prices of originals have been holding relatively stable in recent months despite high stocks and lower demand, observed Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH in his European market report. At the same time, autumn collection volumes 'have remained within the normal averages of recent years'. Wipers are continuing to sell quite well but at lower prices, whereas the feathers market has become 'a lost cause' as prices continue to sink, according to the President of the BIR Textiles Division.

Alan Wheeler of the Textile Recycling Association reported that the price of original second-hand clothing in the UK has continued to increase steadily since the previous BIR convention in early June. His country's annual exports of used clothing surged from around 200 000 tonnes five years ago to 305 000 tonnes in 2007, with particularly strong growth in shipments to Poland and the Ukraine, he also reported.

The UK's Association of Charity Shops has reported a 'significant' recent decline in donations to their outlets,

attributing this to increases in the amount of clothing collected door to door. Mr Wheeler added: 'We also feel that the world recession could also be affecting donations to charity shops.'

Annex VII concerns

The guest presentation from Tilman Baehr of Hamburg's Department of Transfrontier Shipments of Waste underlined that the EU's new Waste Framework Directive positions recycling above other forms of recovery - such as energy recovery - in the hierarchy of options for dealing with materials designated as 'waste'. Specifically in relation to waste shipments, he acknowledged the recycling industry's deep concerns over the threat to commercial confidentiality posed by Annex VII document requirements. Mr Baehr also agreed that sorted textiles placed in containers and exported to another country for subsequent sale should be considered products rather than waste because they meet the criteria of having a value and satisfying a demand without inflicting damage on the environment. □



Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus.



Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex in France.