

Plastics



Market 'weaker than expected' in 2010

China imported 3.14 million tonnes of plastic scrap in the first five months of this year alone - a true testament to the country's importance to the global market. But having revealed these figures, Jacques Musa of Veolia Propreté France Recycling went on to suggest that the plastics scrap market has been 'weaker than expected' in 2010, not least because many buyers have adopted a 'wait-and-see' policy.

According to Mr Musa, demand has been affected by events within China, including: the development of prime polyethylene production by domestic enterprises; energy restrictions which allow factories in some areas to operate only between 9am and 5pm; tighter customs controls; stricter environmental obligations backed up by severe penalties for non-compliance such as production unit closures; higher labour costs; and also exchange rate movements. Commenting on the French market, Mr Musa contended that 'strong' demand for secondary material has resulted in some 'low qualities' coming forward.

More container scans

In other reports, Peter Daalder of Daly Plastics in the Netherlands complained about the substantial additional costs entailed by the increased frequency of

container scans at ports. He also called for a stop on the production of biodegradable plastics to avoid any problems in the recycling process. In terms of market developments, he said that prices are stable although export values have been influenced by the weakness of the US dollar.

BIR Plastics Committee Chairman Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation NV explained that plastics consumption in India is likely to grow strongly given that current per capita usage of 6kg per year continues to trail the world average of 27kg by some considerable distance. In the weeks leading up to the Brussels meeting, however, demand from India had declined significantly, it was noted.

Earlier, Mr Borad had suggested that carbon emission reduction and recycling targets will have an enormous impact on the recycling industry,

prompting him to reiterate his call for plastics recycling to be eligible for carbon credits. The same speaker also insisted that recycling is widely accepted as 'the most obvious solution' to the ever-deepening scarcity of resources.

Benefits of sorting

Guest speaker Faisal Baig of optical sorting specialist Buhler Sortex Ltd in the UK provided illustrations of how value can be added to a material stream by introducing optical sorting at various stages

on PET, HDPE, uPVC and WEEE processing lines. Through judicious use of sorting options, recyclers can achieve '70-80% of the virgin price', he insisted.

Dirk Segers, Managing Director of Belgium-based Marsh SA, then underlined the importance to exporters of re-evaluating risks on a regular basis in order to ensure optimum marine and transport insurance cover. He also urged exporters to 'know your customers' and also to gain an understanding of shipping-related idiosyncrasies that may apply in their country or region. □



Faisal Baig, Marketing manager at Buhler Sortex.



Dirk Segers, Director of Maritime Consultancy firm Marsh SA.



Chairman of the BIR Plastics Committee, Surendra Borad.

Europe - a tyre recycling world-beater

Europe's recovery rate for end-of-life tyres has surged to 96% - putting the continent ahead of the rest of the world in terms of recycling, enthused BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of Vaco in the Netherlands. Addressing the Round-Table in Brussels, Mr Ten Bruggencate urged would-be innovators to make use of EU research funds that have already made a significant contribution to finding useful

outlets for yesteryear's 'mountains' of used tyres. Asphalt is emerging as 'the best solution for the long term', he said, adding 'the continued evolution of end-of-life tyre collection and treatment will drive down the cost of recycling and will contribute to a more sustainable environment'.

The potential for the EU to produce end-of-waste criteria for tyre-derived granulate was assessed by guest

speaker Kees Wielenga of the Ffact consultancy in Belgium. He estimated that, even if work were to begin immediately, this process would take 'at least three years'. While the European Commission is unlikely to prioritise this relatively small material stream, there is no reason, he said, why industry itself cannot seize the initiative by: indicating which industry standards would apply, or developing such stan-

dards; checking if these would meet Waste Framework Directive criteria; and trying to win support from legislators for the 'package' it devises. If industry chooses to follow this route, he added, it is essential to involve the influential tyre manufacturing sector and to keep legislators informed. Development of end-of-waste criteria would help remove 'ambiguities' for authorities, Mr Wielenga argued.

