

BIR calls for polluter-pays principle to be applied for POP phase-out exemptions

Restrictions on fibre and chemical textile recycling expected

(WW) – Manufacturers should only receive an exemption allowing them to market products containing persistent organic pollutants (POPs) if they have made financial provisions for the environmentally sound end-of-life management of such products, argues the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) in a draft position paper. Olivier François from the Belgian recycling group Galloo, the president of BIR's International Environment Council (IEC), and Ross Bartley, the organisation's Trade & Environment Director, presented the draft in Hong Kong at the end of May.

Mr Bartley illustrated the problem using the example of the flame retardant DecaBDE, which was banned by the signatories to the Stockholm Convention on POPs, with some exceptions at the beginning of May. According to Mr Bartley, the exemptions allow products such as automotive and aircraft components, certain textiles, plastic casing and parts for household heaters, and polyurethane foam for building insulation containing DecaBDE to be sold until 2036 or even 2070. These products could end up as waste as late as 2100, it is estimated. However, there is no exemption for recycling so the POP-containing wastes have to be treated as hazardous waste. As a result, recyclers say they are facing steadily rising costs.

Olivier François explained the extent of the problem. The Stockholm Convention, which has been signed by 180 countries including the EU, covers around 30 POPs, he said. Within the EU, things were moving much faster, the BIR IEC president said. In 2016, 169 chemicals were classified as substances of very high concern (SHVC), meaning their use in the EU requires approval under the Chemicals Regulation (REACH). This figure could rise to around

3,000 substances by 2020, Mr François reckons.

From the recycling industry's perspective, there were several possible ways to balance the circular economy with the aim of achieving an environment free of toxic substances. First, it was necessary to not only prohibit the use of such substances, but also to ban their import and export. As a negative example, Mr François noted that the approval regulations in the EU do not apply to products from third countries.

Second, the polluter-pays principle must be implemented and producers must cover the costs of the treatment of the contaminated material that gets separated during the recycling process, he urged. The draft BIR position proposes that for this to be achieved, producers should establish global or national financing funds in their markets. Extended producer responsibility (EPR) was not suitable to effect environmentally and recycling-friendly product design, said Ross Bartley in calling for the establishment of a fund. In BIR's view, producers should finance the environmentally sound management of POP-containing products, including, if necessary, the separation of materials containing POPs and the destruction or irreversible transformation of producers could

be obligated to use recycled materials, as well, in order to indirectly support the separation of toxic substances.

Ross Bartley said it was vital for the recycling industry to be "on the right side of the argument". He also pointed out that chemical legislation and waste legislation are steadily converging. Mr Bartley said that this year the EU is expected to ban the use of carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic (CMR) substances in shoes, clothing and other textiles with similar body contact, such as bedding and towels, with immediate effect. Of the approximately 280 chemicals investigated, around 30 are still being discussed.

An exemption had been requested and promised for the reuse of used textiles, according to Mr Bartley. However, he thinks it is likely that restrictions will be placed on fibre recycling and chemical recycling processes.

Mr Bartley also noted separately that a public-private partnership relating to household waste had been launched during the 13th conference of the parties to the Basel Convention (BC COP-13) in early May. This was not related to transboundary shipments, but rather to the environmentally sound management of domestic arisings of this waste stream in developing countries and emerging markets. Mr Bartley called on BIR members active in the collection or separate collection of household waste to take part in the Basel Convention project in order to illustrate the range of services offered by private companies. □

ECHA committee recommends classification of titanium dioxide as carcinogenic

Repercussions for the waste management industry as yet unclear

(EU) – The Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has recommended that the chemical titanium dioxide (TiO₂) be classified as "a substance suspected of causing cancer" by inhalation in humans. Titanium dioxide is the most common white pigment and is used by numerous industries in a wide variety of applications including the manufacturing of paints, varnishes, plastics and paper.

The French agency for food, environmental and occupational health and safety ANSES (Agence nationale de sécurité sanitaire de l'alimentation, de l'environnement et du travail) had sought to have the chemical classified as a Category 1B carcinogen, "known or presumed to have carcinogenic potential for humans" under the EU Regulation on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures (the CLP Regulation). The French proposal was based primarily on the results of studies in rats, which were exposed to extremely high concentrations of TiO₂ dusts.

According to the German chemicals industry trade group VCI, which opposes the classification, the heavy exposure to dust particles produced "lung overload" effects. The organisation points out that ECHA's own guidelines as well as those of the OECD and Ecetoc (European Centre for Ecotoxicology and Toxicology of Chemicals) do not allow findings of lung overload studies in rats to be applied to humans as rats have been shown to respond differently to particle exposure than humans do, making them a poor tool in the assessment of human risk.

Responding to the decision by the RAC, the VCI said that it was unclear how the committee could conclude that the classification was justified. The recommendation would result in considerable uncertainty on the part of consumers, said Gerd Romanowski, director of science, technical and environmental affairs at VCI. Epidemiological studies had shown no connection between exposure at

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By completing the second of two terms of office allowed under the group's statutes, **Reinhold Schmidt** has ended his presidency of the paper division at the BIR (Bureau of International Recycling) Convention in Hong Kong in late May. At the same time **Thomas Braun**, managing director of the German association for secondary raw materials and waste management bvse, laid down the honorary office of general delegate of the BIR paper division which he has held for many years. However, Mr Braun remains vice president of the European Recovered Paper Association (ERPA) and a member of the board of the European Recycling Industries' Confederation EuRIC.