

Textiles



The return of negative sentiment

Apart from guest presentations, the BIR Textiles Division meeting in Rome was devoted almost entirely to a debate of the many factors contributing to a worsening of business conditions. Indeed, its President found himself in the unusual position of expressing a downbeat opinion on the sector's immediate prospects.

A number of factors have collided to spread disquiet in textiles recycling circles.

For Europe's sorters, prices of originals have spiralled to such high levels that it is proving almost impossible to run profitable operations in high-wage countries. And the financial pressure has been compounded by higher petrol costs, elevated wage bills and container rental costs soaring to 'dizzying heights', the President of the BIR Textiles Division, Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH,

lamented at the meeting in Rome. For the first in his years as divisional head, he described himself as 'very pessimistic' about the business outlook.

And Mr Rintsch was not alone in his more gloomy assessment of market conditions. For example, the Textiles Division's Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Germany-based Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH confirmed in his US market report: 'Prices of originals have been so high that sorters have faced shortages and have had to reduce their capacities. Some sorters have had to leave the business altogether.' The wiper market in Japan is weak and 'no recovery is imminent', he also said.

Increase in theft

Theft of containers or of their contents is another factor undermining the industry's well-being, with divisional Vice President Mehdi Zerroug

of Framimex in France suggesting that such instances 'have increased substantially in their frequency, and legal measures to fight this have been insufficient to date'.

He also reported that, in his own country, the volumes coming from each container have been typically 15-20% lower on average in the first half of this year when compared to the same months in 2011. 'This drop-off can be attributed to the combination of an unfavourable climate, the economic crisis, an increase in competition and finally an upturn in the number of collection containers,' he told delegates. Across in Belgium, reported Pol T'Jollyn of NV Recutex, difficulties have also been encountered in obtaining good-quality originals at reasonable prices. And the Italian market report from Sauro Ballerini noted that the economic crisis in Europe has made the public more reluctant to discard their old clothes; he also said that demand from Egypt has increased slightly owing to a reduction in customs charges.

In a guest overview of recycling in Central America, Sandra Chinchilla - General Manager of Fibertex in El Salvador - pointed out that around 60% of the region's population tends to buy used clothing, before adding: 'There is much work to be done by governmental authorities to encourage industry and to educate the public with regard to recycling in general.'



President of the BIR Textiles Division, Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus.



Textiles Division Honorary President Klaus Löwer.

Tyres

Tyres Committee: Europe leads the way

Europe has established itself as a world tyre recycling leader, with figures for 2010 showing that around 95% of EU-27 arisings in that year were destined for recovery rather than for landfill compared to 75% as recently as 2004.

Around 80% of tyres going down the material recovery route in the EU were converted into rubber granulate while more than 90% of tyres heading into energy recovery were used by the cement industry - an outlet which is 'growing more and more', explained BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of Netherlands-based VACO in his Rome presentation.

And while high ELT recovery rates have also been achieved in North America and Japan for some time, there are now clear signs of the development of a used tyre recycling infrastructure within Russia - although this remains 'decades behind Western Europe', according to Mr Ten Bruggencate.

'Our future'

The advantages of developing end-of-waste criteria for used tyres within the EU was explored by Tyres Committee guest speaker Kees van Oostenrijk, a board member of the RecyBEM organisation in the Netherlands which is responsible for the implementation of the Dutch Decree on Car Tyre Management on behalf of the tyre sector. He described end-of-waste criteria as 'our future' for used tyres and suggested their formulation would ultimately lead to a reduction in costs. Mr Van Oostenrijk also talked about research and development work into devulcanisation and pyrolysis, going on to suggest that these techniques could have a substantially increased impact on tyre recycling in the future. □

BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate (left) and guest speaker Kees van Oostenrijk, both from the Netherlands.

