

Plastics

Prices and collections under threat from export restrictions

Barriers to scrap exports from the EU would run counter to the bloc's goal of creating a resource-efficient economy, BIR Plastics Committee chairman Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation NV insisted in Miami. 'If there are any restrictions whatsoever, prices will collapse and collection of scrap will go down,' he argued.

Provided that recycling was conducted in an environmentally sound manner, 'let the markets decide the flow of goods', he urged.

Borad made his comments in the context of the protectionist measures adopted by some European nations, such as the provision within Spain's Waste Act of 2012 to allow retailers and banks among others to demand that their waste be recycled within Europe. Only 12% of EU-generated plastics waste was actually recycled within EU borders while some 38% was still landfilled because the region

'does not have enough capacity to recycle it', he pointed out to delegates.

China less competitive

Borad went on to suggest that the recent election of a pro-business government in India could prompt the issuing of more plastics scrap import licences while Fukutomi's Dr Steve Wong, president of the China Scrap Plastic Association, argued that 6.5% import tariffs and 17% VAT had weakened his country's competitiveness in procuring recyclable plastics. Challenges in China, he added, include the combination of lower volumes of plastics scrap available and a significant number of new entrants into the sector. While China continued to be the main destination for many of the plastic scrap grades produced in the USA, soaring labour costs were making the Asian giant less competitive, added Hamilton Wen, director of the Plastic Division at US broker Newport CH International, LLC. Meanwhile, the

country's Green Fence import quality initiative had led to a shift in scrap flows to other destinations. 'China really was the place to go but we're seeing that change now,' said Wen. 'Green Fence has really given these other markets a chance to develop.'

Continuing the theme of international material flows, Gregory Cardot of Veolia in France said that customs controls had been intensified in Europe.

'A good marketplace'

Among a number of guest speakers to address the meeting in Miami, Bill Car-teaux contended that plastics 'will have a continued role in modern society'. But the president of US plastics industry trade association SPI also highlighted a need to address the perceived lack of recyclability of plastic products

and also the lack of post-consumer supply to meet demand.

However, the overall tone of the debate was upbeat. For example, James Glaus-er - senior consultant at US-based global information company IHS - insisted that recycled plastics had carved out a role in the marketplace. 'And that's not going to change,' he predicted. 'It's going to be a good marketplace.'

The BIR Plastics Committee's chairman was quick to agree: 'Plastics recycling is a very promising business. All of us couldn't be in a better business.' □



Steve Wong: competitiveness weakened by 6.5% import tariffs.



Hamilton Wen: 'China really was the place to go.'

Tyres



The European authorities had now been presented with all of the information they needed to arrive at a decision on end-of-waste status for tyre-derived granulates and casings for retreading, the BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee meeting in Miami was assured by guest speaker Kees van Oostenrijk, director of Dutch end-of-life tyre (ELT) management organisation RecyBEM.

End-of-waste 'an extremely big step'

Describing the European Parliament's rejection late last year of the end-of-waste proposal for paper as 'very unlucky', Van Oostenrijk argued that tyres represented 'a totally different product' and 'a speciality'. End-of-waste status, he added, would 'create some stability and space for new developments for materials from ELTs'. BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of VACO, also in the Netherlands, hailed this push for end-of-waste status as 'an extremely big step'. From a low point in the early 1990s when domestic stockpiles contained more than 2 billion used tyres, there was now a 'very high utilisation' of ELTs

in the USA, observed Charles Astafan, general manager of tyre recycling equipment manufacturer Columbus McKinnon. Recent statistics showed around 38% going into tyre-derived

fuel, 24% into ground rubber and 8% into civil engineering applications. Having attributed some geographical shortages of material in part to shipments between continents, Astafan

added: 'Years ago, people would never have thought this would happen due to the high cost of moving material.' And he went on to warn that existing outlets for ELTs were 'fragile' and that 'new, higher-value markets are required for the industry to continue to grow'.



Kees van Oostenrijk: European Parliament's rejection for paper was 'very unlucky'.



Charles Astafan: 'New, higher-value markets are required for the industry to grow.'