

'Green Fence' alters plastic scrap flows



Plastics

Following the implementation of 'Green Fence' import quality controls early in 2013, EU and US shipments of plastics scrap to China had suffered marked falls. Furthermore, there had been evidence of trade flows 'shifting from China to other countries', it was noted in Warsaw by BIR Plastics Committee chairman Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation.

Chinese imports of European plastics scrap had tumbled 16% in the first half of the year when compared to January-June 2012, although Borad also pointed out that total exports from Europe to non-EU countries had fallen 14% in the opening six months of the year even when taking these flow shifts into account. According to the US market report submitted by Larry Schipper of International

Alloys, newer markets were emerging - such as Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia - to 'take the place of some of the loss of shipments of Chinese grades'.

'Blessing in disguise'

Borad acknowledged that 'Green Fence' had not been good for traders in the short term and had led to 'widespread confusion and indecisiveness'. In the long run, however, he believed the qual-

ity controls would prove to be a 'blessing in disguise' and would benefit not only the trading community but also the plastics recycling industry, the users of reprocessed materials and the environment through, for example, increased sorting in exporting countries and regions - including the USA and Europe where insufficient capacity existed to recycle all the available volumes. He pointed out that only 6.6 million

tonnes of the 25 million tonnes of plastic waste generated each year in Europe went for material recycling, of which around half was recycled beyond the continent's borders.

Joint specifications

In other presentations to the BIR Plastics Round-Table, the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries' president Robin Wiener confirmed that her organisation and the Association of Postconsumer Plastic Recyclers had recently published joint plastic model bale specifications, including Bulky Rigids, Tubs and Lids with Bulky, and Tubs and Lids without Bulky. And marketing specialist Pawel Polonecki of the BYS waste management group contended that more raw materials would come on to the market each year as a result of regulations introduced in Poland this year which made local authorities the owners of the municipal waste produced in their respective areas. □

End-of-waste status 'essential' for used tyres

Despite the importance of the issue, a disappointing amount of attention had been paid by the European authorities to a concept end-of-waste declaration document for end-of-life tyres (ELTs), it was lamented by Kees van Oostenrijk, director of the Dutch ELT management body RecyBEM. Tyres are listed by the EU as a possible category of waste for which end-of-waste specifications and criteria should be developed, and

efforts are continuing to be made to secure this status not only for tyre casings suitable for retreading but also for granulates, powder and chips obtained from the processing of the rubber fraction from tyres, he explained. Given that end-of-waste status would be 'an essential benefit' to the used tyre industry, such as through the reduction of administrative burdens, it was 'a pity' the document had not attracted a more animated response, he told the BIR Tyres Round-Table in Warsaw.

BIR Tyres Committee chairman Barnd Ten Bruggencate of Vaco, also based in the Netherlands, acknowledged the 'challenge' of achieving end-of-waste status as well as the importance of close links with universities as a means of building scientific knowledge in crucial areas for tyre recycling such as devulcanisation.

Grzegorz Karnicki, operations director of leading Polish producer responsibility organisation CUO, told the same meeting that his country's ELT recovery volumes had leapt from 23 000 tonnes in 2002 to 185 000 tonnes a decade later. In 2012, some 54% went for energy recovery while 29% was converted into powders and granulate. And having pointed out that Sweden, Norway and Finland had been achieving a 100% tyre recycling rate since the turn of the Millennium, fellow guest speaker Hans van Mameren of recycler Ragn-Sells confirmed that 45% of ELTs were currently destined for material recycling and 55% for energy recovery, although the aim was to reverse these numbers by 2014. He predicted that producers of rubberised asphalt would be the biggest buyers of product derived from ELTs at some point in the future.



According to Surendra Borad, 'Green Fence' has led to 'widespread confusion and indecisiveness'.