

Plastics

Develop other export outlets, urges Chairman

Chinese imports of plastics scrap recorded growth of more than 10% in the first quarter of this year - not bad for a country which had already established itself as the pre-eminent consumer of material drawn from many parts of the world. However, the attractiveness of this situation for China's many overseas suppliers was called into question in Istanbul.

It is a conundrum facing many sectors of the recycling industry: how to prevent China's appetite for raw materials from turning into a disquieting market domination. According to the Chairman of BIR's Plastics Committee Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation NV, Europe's plastics scrap recyclers have become 'over-reliant' on exporting to China and must make a concerted effort to address this 'serious' issue. Of the 3.3 million tonnes of plastics scrap exported from the EU last year, 90% went to China and Hong Kong, prompting Mr Borad to say: 'If the Chinese plastics market sneezes, we get a cold; if the Chinese get a cold, we develop a fever; if the Chinese get a fever, then we develop pneumonia. China and Hong Kong have a tremendous impact on our business.'

'De-block' restrictions

Re-elected in Istanbul to serve a further term as BIR Plastics Committee Chair-

man, Mr Borad called on the plastics recycling sector in Europe to 'develop other markets by de-blocking the restrictions on imports into other regions' such as India and the Middle East.

Taking the former as his example, he pointed out that India offers healthy demand for PET scrap as well as a consistent market for clean low-density polyethylene. And yet with the exception of PET, imports of plastics scrap into India can be undertaken by only around 30 companies. He blamed this circumstance on the mindset of the country's officials and government ministries, adding that India 'considers scrap as waste whereas China considers scrap as raw materials'.

Jacques Musa of Veolia Propreté France Recycling reported that no significant price fluctuations were anticipated for scrap exports to China in June. Meanwhile, the French market was beset by a shortage of available secondary raw material, he said, with volumes of post-consumer PET bottles proving to be insufficient to meet demand. Reporting for Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, Gregory Cardot of Veolia Propreté agreed with



Mr Musa that stable prices for shipments to China were anticipated for this month.

No longer rocket science

The importance of preventing plastic pollution from entering the world's oceans and of finding uses for the plastics removed from these waters was underlined by Doug Woodring, Co-founder and Director of Project Kaisei. Ed Kosior, Managing Director of UK-based Nextek Ltd, then highlighted some of the value-adding technologies available for handling both segregated and mixed plastics streams. His company's projects in Europe include creating diesel from mixed plastics and converting used milk bottles into brand new milk containers. Adopting the recycling route to make food-grade PET and HDPE 'is not rocket science any more', he added. □

Europe's scrap tyre landfilling dwindles to 6%

Across Europe, recovery of energy from end-of-life tyres (ELTs) is becoming an ever more important factor in the market, according to the Chairman of the BIR Tyres Committee Barend Ten Bruggencate of the Netherlands.

Figures from the European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers' Association (ETRMA) reveal that materials recovery accounted for 39% of the 3.281 million tonnes of scrap tyres arising in the EU-27 bloc plus Switzerland and Norway in 2008 - equivalent to 1.273 million tonnes. The proportion diverted into energy recovery was not far behind on 37%, or 1.199 million tonnes. With reuse (3%), exports (5%) and retreading (11%) also taking a share of the market, the proportion of ELTs entering landfill across these 29 countries was slashed to 6% in 2008, Mr Ten Bruggencate emphasised.

The Secretary General of Turkey's ELT producer responsibility organisation Lasder confirmed in Istanbul that 10 of his country's 48 cement factories are burning scrap tyres as an alternative fuel and that consumption capacities in this sector are expected to rise by 100 000 tonnes or possibly more within the next four years. Bahadır Ünsal also pointed out that material derived from some 11 granulators in Turkey is being used in, among other applications, sports/play surfaces, speed bumps and even shoes.

Lasder aims to collect 60% of the ELTs sold by its producer members in 2012 and 100% in 2013.



BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of the Netherlands.



Jacques Musa of Veolia Propreté France Recycling.



Chairman of BIR's Plastics Committee Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation.