

Plastics & Tyres

Focus on plastics recycling in India and Italy

Several new national market reports were to be heard at the BIR Plastics Round-Table in Brussels, including a fascinating insight into plastics recycling activities in India and observations on the scale of the recycling sector in Italy.

Plastics recycling activity in India can only increase given that the country's per capita plastics consumption is still only 4 kg compared to a world average of 20 kg, according to Surendra Kumar Borad of Gemini Corporation NV in Belgium, a company with established export links to India.

India currently has a largely disorganised plastics recycling sector boasting an annual capacity of around 600 000 tonnes. The sector is dominated by small companies which have an average monthly production of just 50-60 tonnes and which have started up with machinery investments averaging just Euro 20 000. However, despite a lack of formal collection systems, India relies on imports for only 12% of its raw materials. These are bought mainly from the U.S. and also from Europe.

Alleged 'dumping' of plastics scrap had led the Indian government to introduce 'elaborate' restrictions with the result that that only 22 units were currently licensed to receive overseas material. The plastics recycling industry in India had 'tremendous' potential for expansion although this would be released only if the import system were simplified and investment incentives were increased, claimed Mr Borad.

Mirella Galli, Managing Director of Ricoplast and President of ASSORIMAP in Italy, estimated the

plastics recycling capacity in her country at 1.4 million tonnes per annum. She emphasised that Italy's plastics recyclers had proved themselves keen to buy material not only in Europe but farther afield.

Market reports at the Plastics Round-Table generally confirmed the existence of price pressure in many areas of the primary and secondary plastics business. For example, Chairman Peter Daalder of Daly Plastics BV in The Netherlands noted that new polyethylene prices fell by between Euro 150 and 200 per tonne during September. The Chairman also outlined a BVSE/BIR project to create an English version of the European plastic scrap specifications for use in worldwide trading. Publication is anticipated within a matter of months.

Tyre landfilling ban looms large

An EU ban on the landfilling of whole tyres is less than eight months away and yet, according to feedback from the BIR Tyres Round-Table in Brussels, certain European countries appear to be struggling to make progress towards this deadline.

The U.K. has become a cause for 'sorrow' because, with only a short time left before the EU ban on landfilling whole tyres takes effect, the country is actually witnessing an increase in tyre landfilling. So said Barend Ten Bruggencate of Vaco in The Netherlands in his role as Chairman of the BIR Tyres Round-Table.

The EU ban on dumping whole

tyres comes into effect on July 16 next year while a ban on the dumping of shredded tyres is set to follow exactly three years later. As well as highlighting the problems in the U.K., Mr Ten Bruggencate also voiced concern about the lack of progress in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece.

Quoting latest figures from BLIC, the Round-Table Chairman reported that material recycling and energy recovery from tyres had improved in the EU to 20% and 24% respectively. Retreading and landfilling were in decline at around 10% and 34% respectively, while EU exports remained largely unchanged at some 12%. In terms of scrap tyre arisings, Germany was EU leader on 610,000 tonnes per annum followed by the UK on 435,000 tonnes, France on 405,000 tonnes, Italy on 330,000 tonnes and Spain on 244,000 tonnes.

Mr Ten Bruggencate also touched on a topic to which significant time was devoted during the Brussels Convention, namely the 'Mayer Parry II' opinion handed down by Advocate General Alber in the context of the EU Packaging Waste Directive. This implied that recycling and material recovery had been completed only once materials had undergone final reprocessing by scrap consumers.

'Such a definition demonstrates the need for further work on the waste definition,' underlined Mr Ten Bruggencate. 'Clearly it does not take into consideration the value added by the scrap processors to the waste materials which are collected and diverted from the waste stream and which are certainly not discarded.' □



Chairman of the Plastics Round Table Peter Daalder of Daly Plastics in The Netherlands.



Mirella Galli, President of Assorimap, Italy, gave an overview on plastics recycling in Italy.

By Ian Martin