

## Plastics

# China opens gate to PET bottle imports



China's Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) has issued licences to four of the country's recycling facilities to import PET bottles, it was reported to the BIR Plastics Committee meeting in Singapore by Candy Chen of Veolia Propreté. And other pre-processed materials could follow through the import 'gate', she told delegates.

The Chinese government is keen to 'develop the domestic plastic reprocessing business to a higher international level' by eliminating some smaller processing lines and by promoting larger and better-qualified plants. The country achieved a recycling rate of around 25% last year (equivalent to more than 17 million tonnes); the aim is to advance this figure to 30% by 2015 although Ms Chen cast doubt on whether such strong growth could be achieved. Ms Chen's update on the Chinese market also revealed that the pace of its plastics scrap imports slowed to 1.8 million tonnes in the first quarter of 2011 from 9.4 million tonnes in 2010 as a whole. BIR Plastics Committee Chairman Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation NV noted that China was the magnet for a huge proportion of the 14 million tonnes of plastics scrap traded worldwide each year.

### 'Important step'

According to the same speaker, plastics scrap prices in Europe had fallen recently 'because of less demand from China and India'; this was despite the fact that

prices of primary material had jumped 'almost as high as pre-crisis levels'. Mr Borad also noted that, at EU level, end-of-waste criteria had been agreed for iron/steel and aluminium scrap and that plastics scrap is in line for similar consideration. He expressed the hope that, in perhaps a year or so from now, plastics scrap satisfying stipulated criteria could be deemed to be a raw material rather than a waste. 'This would be a very important step,' he insisted. Among other presentations, Jacques Musa of Veolia Propreté in France reported that, on occasions, recycled PET had fetched a higher market price than primary material. With primary plastics generally achieving levels 'not seen in a long time', converters have been complaining of shrinking margins and price instability, he added. □



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



Candy Chen of Veolia Propreté: 'Soon, pre-processed plastics can be imported into China.'

## Textiles

# Price and quality out of kilter



Fears that political and social unrest in parts of the Arab world would bring about a change in the flow of used textiles have proved to be largely unfounded, it was noted by Textiles Division board member Sauro Ballerini of Italy at the latest gathering in Singapore. In the event, the disruption lasted 'only for a short period', he said.

Meanwhile, Europe has witnessed an enormous demand for originals - although quality has not always matched the price tag, argued BIR Textiles Division President Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH. The division's Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH, also based in Germany, agreed that the high costs associated with purchasing originals have 'cast a shadow over good sales opportunities'.

### 'Quite low yields'

Mr Rintsch went on to report that rental costs relating to collection container sites have been rising and yet recovered volumes have declined. Meanwhile, the market for sorted/unsorted shoes has been healthy while feathers have attracted ready buyers who, nevertheless, have not been prepared to match previous peak levels. In the case of both wipers and the recycling grades, costs have been difficult to cover, according to the divisional President. Mehdi Zerroug of Fra-

mimex in France also confirmed 'quite low yields' from collection containers. In his farewell presentation as the division's General Delegate, Alexander Gläser of Germany-based Fachverband Textil-Recycling eV insisted once again that people consigning clothing to collection bins are not simply disposing of an item but are making a donation that 'has a specific intention behind it'. Mr Rintsch argued in similar vein that it was difficult to regard second-hand clothing as 'waste' when it was worn by some 70% of the world's population. And he underlined textiles recyclers' long-established 'green' credentials with the rallying cry: 'We were environmentalists before anyone else thought of the environment.' The Textiles Division's guest speaker - Osamu Shoji, President of Shoji & Co Ltd in Japan - reported that his country's second-hand clothing exports attained a record high of 161 695 tonnes last year compared to 143 642 tonnes in 2009. Last year, 97% of this clothing was directed to other parts of Asia, with most of the remainder heading to Africa. □



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