

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. Around 70 countries are represented through their national trade associations and individual companies which are involved in recycling. BIR comprises four commodity divisions: iron and steel, non ferrous metals, paper and textiles, and has committees dealing with stainless steel and special alloys, plastics and rubber. BIR's primary goals are to promote recycling and recyclability, thereby conserving natural resources, protecting the environment and facilitating free trade of secondary raw materials.

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BIR Autumn Round-Table Sessions **Amsterdam, 26-27 October 2009**

Plastics Committee: ***Plastics Recycling – a “sunrise industry”***

“There will be a substantial increase in trade in recyclables” and, therefore, “we must be prepared for a lot of opportunities and challenges”, the BIR Plastics Round-Table in Amsterdam was assured by its Chairman, Surendra Borad of Gemini Corporation BV in Belgium.

Describing plastics recycling as a “sunrise industry”, he pointed specifically to the opportunities inferred by a study which has found that “7% of the EU greenhouse gas reduction target will be achieved if landfilled plastics are either recycled or recovered into energy”. Recycling can also help to alleviate the “large deficit in polymers” set to emerge in Europe and the USA.

During a subsequent series of market reports, Mr Borad described as “worrying” the virtual suspension of scrap imports into the important Kandla special economic zone in India. Differences in the interpretation of rules have meant that “recyclers are facing difficulties in clearing the goods”. Unlike its counterpart in China, the Indian government regards scrap as waste rather than as a raw material, he pointed out.

Moving on to report on the American market, Mr Borad highlighted “good business” for US exporters to Indonesia and Vietnam. In China, meanwhile, an oversupply situation has developed owing to a combination of heavy ordering in previous months and the impact on industrial activity levels of the country’s early-October holiday, observed Jacques Musa of Veolia Propreté France Recycling. Noting that plastics collection volumes in Europe are 30% lower than last year, the same speaker estimated that the majority of recyclers in France are operating at 60% of their capacity. Meanwhile, the difficulty of keeping good-quality material within the domestic market was emphasised in the report from Spain.

Reporting for Germany and the Netherlands, Peter Daalder of Dutch firm Daly Plastics said that prices have come under pressure following a period of gradual improvement; early-October decreases of Euro 50 per tonne for bulk polymers are attributed mainly to the impact on export demand of the holidays in China.

One of two guest speakers at the Round-Table in Amsterdam, Peter Kuiper explained that his organisation ARN will focus on post-shredder technology at a specially-built facility in Tiel so as to ensure the Netherlands meets the EU requirement to recycle 95% by weight of a car by the year 2015. He went on to describe shredder residues as “a huge potential source for plastics recycling”.

According to Mr Kuiper, who is Project Manager at ARN, the organisation has already recycled 18,000 tonnes of car bumpers, 1300 tonnes of grilles, 2200 tonnes of hub-caps and 20,000 tonnes of polyurethane foam.

In a presentation entitled “Flexibility: the core competence of a recycler”, independent industry expert Ed Flohr said that large companies are “gaining ground” in the waste management and recycling fields, and that “the intensity of competition will grow”. However, flexible smaller businesses will still be in a position to exploit: isolated geographical markets; special materials; new sources; new customers; and “states of confusion” such as “a market in flux”.

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