
PRESS RELEASE

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Plastics Committee: **Europe should monitor its dependence on China**

Europe's plastics scrap recyclers had become "over-reliant" on exports to China and should make efforts to address this "serious" issue, the BIR Plastics Committee meeting in Istanbul was warned by Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation NV. "If the Chinese plastics market sneezes, we get a cold; if the Chinese get a cold, we develop fever; if the Chinese get a fever, then we develop pneumonia," he said.

Re-elected to serve a further term as the committee's Chairman, Mr Borad informed delegates that the EU exported 3.3m tonnes of plastics scrap in 2009, of which 90% went to China and Hong Kong. During the first three months of 2010, he added, China imported 1.8m tonnes.

Mr Borad urged 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. With the exception of PET, he pointed out, imports of plastics scrap into India can be undertaken by only around 30

companies. "The reason for the restriction is the mindset of the Indian officers and ministries," he said. "India considers scrap as waste whereas China considers scrap as raw materials."

At present, India offered good demand for PET scrap and a consistent requirement for clean LDPE, Mr Borad added.

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, Grégory Cardot of Veolia Propreté agreed with Mr Musa that stable prices for shipments to China were anticipated for June.

The President of Turkey's Seta Group, Semih Tugay, gave a guest presentation on the scope for recycled PET compounds to replace engineering polymers. PET's availability and good molecular weight made it excellent for the production of toughened compounds that could, in many cases, compete directly with toughened and glass-filled nylons "at a considerable cost advantage", he contended.

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. His presentation dovetailed with that of Ed Kosior, Managing Director of UK-based Nextek Ltd, who highlighted some of the value-adding technologies available for both segregated and mixed plastics streams. Company 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 insisted.

Mr Kosior also provided a long list of polymers found in waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) - all of which can be "easily" separated into saleable fractions, he argued.

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