

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Hong Kong (22-24 May 2017)

Textiles Division:

Strong used clothing industry “synonymous with growth”

Brussels, 01 June 2017

The success of the used clothing market depends on the know-how of sorters and on a commitment to free trade that is “not fulfilled in every country”, the BIR Textiles Division meeting in Hong Kong on May 22 was told by its President, Mehdi Zerroug of France-based Framimex. In this context, BIR and its partners were continuing to negotiate with the East African Community in their bid to persuade its members that a strong used clothing industry was “synonymous with growth”.

Concern over the potential dislocation of existing trading structures was also voiced by divisional General Delegate Alan Wheeler of the UK's Textile Recycling Association. Having argued that the winning party in the UK's upcoming general election needed to “listen seriously” to industry fears over Brexit, he added: “We need continued access to the EU labour force, unfettered access to EU markets and free movement of goods across EU frontiers. We also want to be able to export our used clothing as a product into the EU and not to have waste regulations slapped on them as soon as they arrive at an EU port, having been shipped from the UK.”

In the European market, Mr Wheeler reported, demand and prices for high-quality original clothing had been “stable” but sorters were reluctant to process lower qualities because these could not be sold at reasonable prices. “Demand for good quality is being driven by Eastern European markets where demand for cream items are exceeding supply,” he noted. For Europe's wipers and recycling grades, however, prices remained “very low or even negative”.

BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS

The report submitted by Osamu Shoji of Shoji & Co., Ltd in Japan confirmed normal domestic collections of original used clothing over the previous six months while prices had been unchanged for a year at just a third of what they had been at their peak some three or four years earlier. Quality was rendering 50% of originals “useless”, he lamented.

In his overview of the Chinese textiles collection, sorting and recycling market, guest speaker Luo Hong Jian of Shenzhen Hengfeng Resources Co., Ltd pointed out that sales of used clothing were not permitted domestically and so it was necessary to reprocess collected material for use in new products. His own company produces, for example, gloves as well as also school bags and backpacks with a 30% recycled content.

The speaker also provided details of the firm’s modern collection system whereby the public can receive credits on their smart devices when donating used textiles through high-tech collection units in retail outlets. These credits can then be used to obtain discounts on a wide range of products sold online.

Some of the R&D designed to help develop new markets and applications for the textiles recycling industry were outlined by fellow guest speaker Alain Claudot of Eco TLC in France. His organisation is currently supporting some 28 projects in fields such as optical sorting.

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