

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention in Paris (27-28 October 2014)

“Leading Expert Talk” on Tyres Recycling:

ELT market needs “a breakthrough in devulcanisation”, tyre experts told

Brussels, 13 November 2014

The importance of driving market innovation and of pursuing end-of-waste status for products derived from end-of-life tyres (ELTs) was stressed by a succession of contributors to a “Leading Expert Talk on Tyres Recycling”, hosted by the BIR global recycling organisation during its recent World Convention in Paris.

Cees van Oostenrijk, Director of Dutch ELT management organisation RecyBEM, argued that “innovation is needed” because demand for products derived from used tyres was growing “insufficiently fast”. On the plus side, he added, tyre producers were taking their ELT responsibilities ever more seriously and were even approaching processors to ask how they might assist them better.

When speaking about innovation, Mr Van Oostenrijk highlighted in particular that the market needed “a breakthrough in devulcanisation” - a topic which was addressed specifically by fellow guest speaker Wilma Dierkes, Associate Professor at University of Twente in the Netherlands. Whereas processes such as pyrolysis generated a number of streams including gas, polymer fragments, oil and residues, devulcanisation produced a replasticised material “with a very high performance”, she explained. Work at her university had focused on the thermal devulcanisation of sulphur-vulcanised styrene-butadiene rubber (SBR) and had already yielded some promising findings - for example, that oxidation stabilisers resulted in more efficient devulcanisation, especially at higher temperatures.

BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS

As regards the continuing push for end-of-waste status within the European used tyre sector, outgoing BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of the Netherlands argued that the necessary qualifying criteria were already met by casings suitable for retreading and also by granulates, powder and chips obtained from the processing of the rubber fraction from tyres. These criteria are: that a market or demand already exists; that there is no overall adverse environmental/human health impact; and that the end product is fit for the specific use, and meets existing technical and legislative requirements.

But despite recognising the “good relationship” and support for an “end-of-waste” regulation among all tyre industry stakeholders, BIR Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley warned that the failure of a similar proposal for waste paper had “harmed the whole process” and bred caution within European Commission circles. But while Mr Bartley suggested this negative experience with paper had made securing end-of-waste status “a lot harder” for other streams, he also underlined: “It’s not impossible.”

The “Leading Expert Talk on Tyres Recycling” also featured presentations from Jean-Philippe Faure, Manager of Research & Development at French ELT management company Aliapur, and from Catherine Clauzade, Chair of Reevalu and of the CEN/TC366 technical committee addressing materials from used tyres. The former pointed out that the share of ELTs destined for energy recovery in France had jumped from around 48% in 2012 to almost 55% last year whereas material recycling from ELTs had slid from over 33% to little more than 28%. And the latter gave firm examples of how standards and standardisation could play a vital role in proving industry’s ability to “produce and reproduce a consistent quality product over time”, thus helping to free up markets that had previously been “blocked”.

****A press release dedicated to the BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee meeting, which also took place at the Paris Convention, was put on the BIR website on November 3.***

ends