

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention (Round-Table Sessions) in New Delhi (14 - 16 October 2017)

Tyres & Rubber Committee:

All evidence points to no health risk from crumb rubber

Brussels, 23 October 2017

“Extremely negative” publicity continues to surround the use of tyre-derived crumb rubber in synthetic turf despite all studies worldwide having arrived at the conclusion that there is no risk to human health.

At the BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee meeting in New Delhi on October 15, its Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of Dutch tyre collection organisation Recybem reported that TV programmes aired recently in the Netherlands have alleged a connection between rubber granulate and health risks to human embryos, as well as an environmental impact from leaching into the soil. “But there is no evidence,” insisted Mr Ten Bruggencate.

On the issue of leaching, he added, tests on water from underneath synthetic turf pitches have indicated that the quality is actually higher than for rainwater.

Similarly in the USA, a series of national news stories broadcast over the last three years has suggested that recycled rubber fields can cause cancer in youth soccer players - but “with no specific evidence”, emphasised Robin Wiener, President of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries.

A multi-agency study involving, among others, the Environmental Protection Agency is “at least a year away” from publishing its conclusions about crumb rubber use in synthetic turf, noted Ms Wiener. It is unfortunate, she added, that “the issue is not going away until there is a definitive study issued” because on-going “speculation” has already led to a 30% market decline for crumb rubber in recent years.

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She urged the research community to be categorical about the risk factor “to help parents, teachers and policy-makers understand the true risks”. Almost 100 studies have been conducted worldwide into crumb rubber use and “none of them have found a health risk”, she underlined.

The Tyres & Rubber Committee’s guest speaker Gaurav Sekhri, Director of India’s Tinna Rubber and Infrastructure Ltd, explained how the business “deconstructs” rather than shreds truck and bus radial tyres to derive “maximum value” from their components to create a range of products, including a fine mesh powder that can be used in new tyre production. The company is also a rubberised asphalt “pioneer” within India, he said, as well as a producer of high-carbon abrasives from the steel content of used tyres.

Tinna has the capacity to process more than 1 million used tyres per annum and is currently achieving a utilisation rate of 60-65%, Mr Sekhri stated.

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