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Recent BIR World Recycling Convention (Round-Table Sessions) in Amsterdam

(24-25 October 2016)

Paper Division: Quality drive “still has further to go”

Greater availability of domestically-collected recovered paper means China “now has its own legs to stand on”, the latest BIR Paper Division meeting was told by Wade Schuetzeberg, Executive Director - European Region, American Chung Nam BV of the Netherlands. Some 80m tonnes was now sourced annually within China, comparing to imports that peaked above 30m tonnes in 2013 and are expected to amount to around 26-27m tonnes this year.

Partly as a result of this development, the quality of imported material will come under ever more intense focus, Mr Schuetzeberg suggested to delegates in Amsterdam on October 25. Europe has improved its quality “but still has further to go”, he contended, adding that “we need to take a greater role within our industry at self-regulation”. Mr Schuetzeberg also warned delegates to be on the alert for an anticipated tightening of controls and regulations in China that “could eliminate complete segments of secondary raw material imports”.

BIR World President and former Paper Division President Ranjit Baxi of UK-based J&H Sales International also referred to increased collections in not only China but also India and South Korea, and to their impact on the grades of recovered paper booked with overseas suppliers. He also lamented the “bumpy ride” suffered by the recovered paper industry in 2016, adding that margins “are constantly threatened by forces beyond our control” such as Brexit and legislative developments. During a panel discussion moderated by Mark Mijster of Paper Marketing in the Netherlands, Mr Schuetzeberg highlighted the adverse business impact of the “inconsistent application” of regulatory controls.

Earlier, current Paper Division President Reinhold Schmidt of Recycling Karla Schmidt in Germany had warned of the continuing incursion of public companies and municipalities into the recovery sector - to the detriment of private businesses which have been providing this service highly efficiently and at a fair cost for many decades. This trend needed to be countered “most decisively”, he insisted.

In market reports covering Northern and Eastern Europe, Lars-Gunnar Almryd of IL Recycling in Sweden identified a recent decline in the OCC price and suggested further downward movement could be seen before year-end. Reporting for Southern Europe, Francisco Donoso of Spain's Alba Servicios Verdes noted growing interest in long-term deals ahead of the high levels of competition anticipated once International Paper starts buying OCC for the former Holmen Paper Madrid operation which it is converting from newsprint to packaging production.

According to the Western European report from Dominique Maguin of La Compagnie des Matières Premières in France, the Brexit vote has had a well-documented impact on the value of the British pound although an offsetting factor in terms of recovered paper prices has been rising freight rates resulting from the collapse of Hanjin Shipping and a localised reduction in container availability.

Reporting on the Middle East market, Tarek Al Sharif of Sharif Metals Int'l LLC of the United Arab Emirates confirmed an increasing local awareness of the importance of recovered paper quality as well as growth in exports from the region to, principally, India and Pakistan.

Also in Amsterdam, BIR's Paper Division awarded its latest Papyrus prize for services to paper recycling to Heiman Bollegraaf, former ceo and owner of Dutch equipment and turnkey installations supplier Bollegraaf Recycling Solutions. Taking over the business in 1988, he expanded its geographical presence and also its product portfolio to include, among others, balers, shredders, separators, screens and conveyors. Receiving the award was “a great pleasure”, he told delegates.