

EUROPEAN PLASTICS CONVERTERS NEWSLETTER

PROVIDES **EuPC** MEMBERS WITH A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF **EuPC** ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES

October 2011

Waste Free Oceans – a time to work together! (Oct. 18th) European Parliament, Brussels



EuPC President Bernhard Borgardt in debate in the European Parliament on Marine litter

On Oct 18th 2011 Waste Free Oceans held its first public conference at the European Parliament in the presence of politicians, NGOs and industry representatives. The aim of this meeting was to promote initiatives which tackle the growing problem of marine litter and to raise awareness on the issue. Waste Free Oceans (WFO) is an industry led initiative, founded by **EuPC**, which aims to work together with fishermen in cleaning up floating marine debris in European coastal waters. Officially launched in May 2011 during the **EuPC** General Assembly, WFO is chaired by Danish MEP Anna Rosbach with the day-to-day work being handled in cooperation with **EuPC**. WFO aims to continue its engagement of the fishing community in working together with industry and public authorities on this very important issue. To date the work of WFO has been applauded by both Commissioners Damanaki (Maritime Affairs & Fisheries) and Potočnik (Environment). If we do not take advantage of the knowledge and expertise of both the fishing community and industry then we are in danger of ignoring the real issues surrounding marine litter and any possibility of tackling it in an efficient and effective way. To find out more about WFO and its progress please visit:

www.wastefreeoceans.eu

Meeting with the EU Commissioner for the Environment Mr Potocnik

On 19th October 2011 a delegation of **EuPC**, EuPF and EuPR met with the EU Commissioner for the Environment Mr Potocnik to present an alternative to regulatory measures on plastics carrier bags. The proposal named V-Bags Europe was welcomed by the EU Commissioner. This proposal still in its draft format is trying to involve the whole value chain related to plastics carrier bags and has the objective to work towards more sustainable use of the plastics carrier bag in Europe by promoting reusable bags, avoid given bags for free and use more renewable and recycled materials in the production of new plastics carrier bags. The Commission is still looking into how to handle the issues at EU level but was very happy with the proposal tabled and encouraged the plastics industry to continue to work in this direction of a European wide voluntary commitment in order to ensure more countries follow the already good example of Germany where the consumption per capita of carrier bags is not more than 1kg.

European Commission aims at changing the legal basis of the Packaging Directive

Helmut Maurer, policy officer in the waste unit of DG Environment explained last week in 'European Environment & Packaging Law (European Environment & Packaging Law, October 12, 2011, n° 269) why the packaging and packaging waste directive's legal base should change from the current internal market to an environmental one. According to him "All the product stream directives - end of life vehicles, batteries, WEEE and packaging should be under the environmental basis". This would allow member states to set tighter national rules whereas now – with an internal market base – they are limited by EU law. A good thing according to Maurer would then be that plastic bags could be banned, which is now legally impossible given the internal market basis to the directive. Maurer was not worried too

much by the fact that a ban would not be popular with the industry: "We are not there to please them; we are there to manage in the best possible way. However, I am very much in touch with industry and with stakeholders to discuss these issues."

The Commission is also thinking of aligning product specific waste legislation such as packaging with the Waste Framework Directive from next year – which could mean higher packaging targets.

This idea is still in the early stage of thinking. Apparently a study (to be published in the following weeks) was done "to take stock of where we are and to make up our minds on where we want to go". According to European Environment and Packaging law Maurer was 'pessimistic' that much would change from the status quo – if that was a good idea or not and he stated: "We do need a much tighter target for plastics waste but the willingness to proceed there is very little in my personal opinion".

To be continued....

Retailers being criticized over food waste

During a debate on food waste on 17 October the European Parliament attacked the retailers because of their misleading use of 'sell by' dates and their 'cosmetic' quality standards. Basis of the debate was the opinion that Danish Conservative Anna Rosbach drafted in reaction to the draft report the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development is writing on how to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU (please click [here](#) for Mrs Rosbach's opinion and [here](#) for the entire draft report). Food waste became an important topic on the European agenda: whereas in Europe as a whole food losses during the production, post-harvest and processing stages and food waste during the retailing and consumption stages amounts to 280 kg/year per capita, a large part of which ends up in landfills or incinerators, producing a large quantity of greenhouse gases (GHG) (methane) during the rotting and combustion processes.

Retailers were under fire because of their use of 'sell by' and 'best before' dates on products as people tend to think these are the same as 'use by' dates and consequently throw away perfectly good food as a result. In response DG Sanco stated that there is no scientific basis for 'best before' dates and that 'sell by' and 'best before' are quality and marketing issues, unlike the 'use by' dates which are based on microbiological standards. Another point of critics are the 'cosmetic' standards they are using which have nothing to do with the quality of the food. Rosbach stated that "a very large proportion of fruit and vegetables don't even reach consumers because retailers demand they look in a certain way."

She admitted that in Europe, where the main food waste takes place at the retails and consumption levels, there is relatively little scope for regulation and legislation to improve the situation and that the main benefit must come from an exchange of best practice, improved routines in the treatment of food and a change in behavior on the part of companies and individuals. She is also of the opinion that excessive 'quality requirements' (whether imposed by European or national legislation or by internal company rules) are at the basis of many unnecessary discards, which increase the amount of food wasted.

EU Ecolabel for food and feed products - feasibility study

The EU Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme that forms part of overall EU policy to encourage more sustainable consumption and production. To date, the EU Ecolabel scheme has developed criteria for products in the non-food sector. The Regulation that governs the scheme (66/2010) aims to extend the EU Ecolabel into new product categories including food. However, the Regulation stipulates that before extending to the food sector, a feasibility study should be undertaken.

The objectives of the study are:

1. to assess the feasibility of establishing reliable Ecolabel criteria covering environmental performance during the whole life cycle of food, drink and feed products, including the products of

2. fishing and aquaculture, fishing and aquaculture, 2. to assess the added value and impacts of establishing such criteria, and implementing the scheme, in the various sectors, and the impact this could have on organically certified products, 3. to consider, in the assessments under (1) and (2), the option of limiting the scope of the Ecolabel to organically certified products (where applicable). The final report of the feasibility study is available [here](#). The study has been undertaken by a consortium of three organisations led by Oakdene Hollins together with the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and the University of Göttingen.

Update on Food Contact Issues

Bisphenol A, used in the production of PC products and as a can coating, has been back in the news recently after a flurry of activity from the French, including a controversial report released by the French Food, Environmental and Safety Agency (ANSES) and a vote on banning the substance in the French Senate. The detailed report from ANSES outlines a number of actions the French agency would like to take regarding the contentious substance. These include a call for papers looking for substitutes to BPA, preparation for a dossier for classification under REACH and an eventual restriction of the substance. Moreover, the report proposes labeling food packaging and utensils that contain BPA. The French agency will deliver a final report by 31 October 2012 with a health risk assessment of BPA as well as a characterisation of exposure via different media. The report has been criticized by many for going against already established data from the European Food Safety Authority on the risks presented by BPA. To that end, EFSA has begun a review of the French report and will present its findings at the end of November.

The report from ANSES was followed a few weeks later by a vote in the French National Assembly on a proposed bill suspending the use of BPA from all packaging aimed at children by January 2013, with a total suspension in place by January 2014. The bill was approved with

an overwhelming majority of 348 for and 2 against in the 12 October vote. The proposed bill still must hold up to scrutiny at EU level, which leaves the possibility for a reversal of the suspension. EuPC is closely monitoring the situation through its Food Contact Regulatory Experts Panel (FREPEX), in cooperation with some of our national associations including Elipso and Federplast.

Recent FREPEX activities

FREPEX has also been active in other food contact related activities including writing guidance documents for two landmark food contact regulations. The first concerns EC 450/2009 on active and intelligent materials intended to come into contact with food. FREPEX has been gathering expert advice from its members to help the Commission draft a guidance document for producers of active and intelligent materials. Such materials include functional barriers, in compliance with Article 3 of the framework regulation EC 1935/2004 on food packaging. EC 1935/2004 is supplemented by EC 10/2011, which focuses specifically on all plastic materials coming into contact with food. Industry has long been waiting for a guidance document on this hefty legislation. Through the Plastics Coordination Group – a co-operation between EuPC, FPE, CEFIC, and Plastics Europe – EuPC is once again tapping its wealth of expert knowledge to induce the Commission into creating a long-awaited Guidance document for EC 10/2011. FREPEX and its expert task force are also gradually closing the data collection phase of the FACET project. FACET is an EU-Funded project aimed at developing a comprehensive exposure modeling software. To provide the raw data necessary for creating this software, FREPEX has been gathering information on packaging structures and compositions as well as conditions of use from a wide network of packaging producers throughout the EU. For more information on FREPEX activities contact Sophia Huda (sophia.huda@eupc.org)

Provisional Draft 2012 EuPC Calendar

22	FEB 2012	Budget Committee	Brussels, EuPC Offices
06	MAR 2012	Packaging Excom	Brussels, EuPC Offices
07	MAR 2012	Steering Committee	Brussels, EuPC Offices
13	MAR 2012	NPA Meeting	Brussels, EuPC Offices
14	MAR 2012	NPA Meeting with PlasticsEurope	Brussels, EuPC Offices
15	MAR 2012	B&C / RM Committees	Brussels, EuPC Offices
30	MAY-1 JUN 2012	EuPC Annual Meeting	Vienna, Austria
11	SEP 2012	Packaging Excom	Brussels, EuPC Offices
12	SEP 2012	Steering Committee	Brussels, EuPC Offices
25	SEP 2012	NPA Meeting	Wiesbaden, Germany
26	SEP 2012	NPA Meeting with PlasticsEurope	Wiesbaden, Germany
12	OCT 2012	B&C/RM Committees	Brussels, EuPC Offices
27	NOV 2012	Packaging Excom/B&C Excom	Brussels, EuPC Offices
28	NOV 2012	Steering Committee	Brussels, EuPC Offices