



PETCORE COLUMN – PETCORE IN 2009

In common with much of industry, 2009 is forecast to be a difficult year for the PET value chain, from raw materials supply through to recycling. Petcore is very aware of the extra pressures on our members and associates whilst we work to facilitate the increase in collection and recycling of PET containers. This has to be seen against a background of downward pressures on PET prices and their consequential effect on recycling margins.

The PET market is still dynamic and Petcore welcomes innovation. There are new PET packaging designs, new barrier materials and other additives being developed which enable more foodstuffs to be safely packaged in PET. There are also new competitive plastics targeting existing PET markets. Petcore continues to evaluate these materials and works to understand their effect on the PET recycle stream.

Could a marker be incorporated into a novel package so that it can be diverted automatically into a separate stream after use and then directed to its most suitable recycle application? Our Technical Committee has identified a promising substance and is arranging trials with the help of a number of interested partners to test our theories. If successful our knowledge will be made available to the industry.

In our last Petcore Column we discussed Life Cycle Analysis (LCA). What would be valuable to the whole of the PET industry and the packaging chain in general, is a publicly available, peer-reviewed LCA of the PET recycle process in Europe. Petcore is in consultation with PET recyclers and other interested parties to pool expertise and resources to produce such an LCA which will complement the LCAs for PET resin production and PET conversion to containers that are available from PlasticsEurope. This extra data would enable all interested stakeholders within the PET value chain to calculate their Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) or their more narrowly focused Carbon Footprint.

At a presentation to the Petcore Technical Committee at the end of 2008, PCI (PET Packaging, Resin & Recycling Ltd) showed that the year on year growth in PET collection was slowing and the more mature collection systems were struggling to increase their capture of PET bottles. European PET recyclers spent last year trying to find enough good quality bales to fill their plants. A high level working party has been set up comprising recyclers, collection agencies, brand owners and Petcore to search for ways to improve collection from households and from outside the home, take out costs and increase efficiency throughout the system.

2008 also saw the publication of the regulation EC 282/2008 on Recycled Materials and Articles intended to come in Contact with Food. These regulations lay down the harmonised conditions under which recycled plastics can be used to package foodstuffs in every EU country. PET is the most recycled food contact packaging material and is regarded as a pathfinder plastic for recycling back to food contact (B2B) by many stakeholders. Recyclers are required to present an extensive technical dossier to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) who will evaluate their local process and grant or withhold approval for individual plants to produce this new and valuable resource. Petcore will provide advice to its members on negotiating this process.

In 2009 Petcore will be continuing to share its expertise and analysis with our industry members, the whole PET value chain and the media. It will identify issues that need resolution to ensure PET recycling growth continues. Petcore will provide high quality technical advice and education using our well respected presentations, positions and media articles.