

Eurosac members gather for annual meeting

This year's Eurosac annual conference, which took place in Hamburg on June 8-10 under the theme "Performance powered by nature. Let's talk!", provided a forum to review the sector's performance over the past year while focusing on effectively promoting the segment's strong suits in the face of an increasingly competitive market.

Dr Eckart Nausch from the DNU Treuhandbüro trustee office provided an overview of current trends in the paper sack market, with a summary of the key statistics for the sector in 2016 and 2017. According to him, deliveries by Eurosac's members, who represent approximately 80% of European paper sack manufacturers' rose by 1.8% year on year to 5.3 billion bag units and by 1.2% to 663,000 tonnes in 2016. Deliveries of sacks in the building material sector increased by 2.6% year on year to 3.3 billion units. Deliveries in the mineral product sector rose by 3.9% year on year, from 110 million units in 2015 to 114 million units in 2016, while those in the chemicals product area moved up by 3.4% from 370 million units in 2015 to 382 million units in 2016. Sacks for food products saw the biggest increase, jumping by 6.4%, from 677 million units in 2015 to 720 million units last year. However, deliveries in the animal feed and seed sectors decreased by 0.2% and 1.2%, to 400 million units and 110 million units in 2016, respectively.

According to Nausch, overall deliveries edged down by 1.9% year on year to 1.9 billion bag units in January-April 2017, with a drop of 5.0% in April only. The first four months of 2017 saw positive results in the milk powder, animal feed and chemical product sectors, whereas the cement, building materials, mineral product, food product and seed areas showed negative results.

Eurosac statistics also showed that eastern European countries – the Czech Republic (-9.8%), Romania (-15.4%) and Bulgaria (-16.7%) – saw the biggest drops in deliveries of bag units in January-April

this year. The Netherlands, Spain, Turkey and Russia were the only countries registering positive results over the period, posting growth of 0.1%, 0.4%, 1.4% and 1.1% in bag unit deliveries, respectively, Nausch said.

A second part of the congress was dedicated to the recent developments in internal Eurosac matters and its involvement in European legislative and lobbying issues.

When it comes to the industry's activities, Eurosac and CEPI Eurokraft senior adviser Stina Blombäck outlined the latest European legislation updates and highlighted the associations' active involvement in the different aspects of current European policy issues such as the Circular Economy and the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF), as well as issues related to food contact materials made of paper and board and mineral oil migration.

Vital Relations' management board member Ingo Theissen gave an overview of the 2016-2017 communication activities of the European Paper Sack Research Group (ESG), a European trade and industry body aiming to improve the competitiveness of paper sacks. "The main mission is to make paper sacks the number-one choice again," said Theissen, adding that the focus is to promote paper sacks as a key combination of performance and sustainability.

The conference wrapped up with the Eurosac Grand Prix 2017 award, promoting recent product innovations from Eurosac members. Three companies were competing for the award: BillerudKorsnäs' RainSafe product, which can withstand at least four hours of rain without water or vapour damaging the filled product; Dy-Pack's Dy-Vest, which boasts the first valve sack technology that fulfils special hygiene requirements, with an outer valve sack layer of the three-ply construction which can be stripped from the inner sack; and Mimcord's Multiply-Cord Handle for paper carrier bags. The prize was awarded to Dy-Pack.