

BY SHIVANI MODY

Plastics industry making an impact on raw material providers.

The dynamics in the country have been undergoing tremendous change over the last few years. As part of this change, plastics industry too has been growing and will continue to do so.

Considering the plastics industry, the idea of 'Sustainability' is coming into play. The market is not yet fully moving towards a sustainable product line, but the thought process has started. It will take some more years to reach the acceptable situation.

Presently, a negative outlook has been created towards the plastics industry and its products. This is unfortunate as a complete industry is branded as a bad industry, on the basis of one wrong application, i.e. the use of thin micron bags, which causes environmental problems. But there are other plastic products and varied applications that provide great benefits.

Today the use of plastics in the automotive, household products, consumer durables, healthcare, packaging industries, etc. cannot be ignored. The plastics industry is consciously looking at ways to improve sustainability with recycling and re-use of products. As a part of the entire process and product life cycle, even raw material manufacturers have to provide quality products. In order to improve their customer capabilities, providers too should have a focus on innovation and extensive research.

Demands of plastic manufactures.

Today, for the plastics industry the need for bio degradability has set in. We have tied up with a US-based company, Willow Ridge Plastics Inc, a leading manufacturer of oxo-biodegradable additives, to offer proven technology products to our customers and

help improve their competitiveness in the marketplace.

The other significant change that is happening in the market is the requirement for higher performance products. Industries in India have reached a level where companies are expanding and installing large processing machines with higher speeds and more technical requirements.

We have also partnered with companies such as Ocsial, a maker of single wall carbon nanotubes. These are used in high end applications like defense and have permanent anti-static properties. Further, there is demand for products with rotational molding which were not present earlier, but customers are now asking for these products.

Focus on innovation

The R&D center located in Delhi, India - 'Alok Technology Incubation Centre' helps us work closely with our customers for their specific needs. We also have tie-ups with universities and professionals from IITs, to enhance our innovation capability and product development.

Some of our products from the lab are: the light diffusers for LED lamps. Alok has developed a light diffusing (LD) technology by adding a plastic filter in front of the LED fixture to reduce the harmful effect of this lighting source on eyes.

The other product is a contribution to agriculture - AgriTEK™ masterbatches. In order to enhance the yield of agriculture productions we have developed films called Mulch films which are laid out on the farms. These range of UV masterbatches are specially designed to increase and enhance the life of those Mulch films. Farmers can use the Mulch films more than once reducing the cost burden and improving crop yield. Another product worth mentioning is the XDetect, where

we can make plastic detectable by magnets, X-rays. With this, if an object has been left behind in the body during surgery, it can be detected in the X-ray.

Issues faced in the plastics industry.

One major issue is the way this industry is getting stereotyped and plastic is earning a bad reputation. Contrary to the popular belief, plastics can be recycled numerous times and can be reused several times. Surely, the responsibility lies on the consumer and the industry alike to complete the entire circle. With awareness, the recycling of plastics will steadily increase and the stigma on plastics will be eliminated.

There are many other challenges in the country. We are hardly an export country; we are not even doing 1 percent of the global exports of plastics. Final products or the raw material export should be incentivized by the government by promoting and removing most of the obstacles which are there in today's process of export and import. This process is more tedious as compared to other countries. By removing the complexities we can ensure better business for the plastics industry.

Expansion plans in India.

We are currently upgrading our production facility and expanding for higher capacity. Additionally we are also enhancing our capability to create better products. These plans will make us more competitive at a global level. Most of our customers are not asking for such high quality today, but we want to be ready before the customers upgrade and ask for global standard, quality products. The slowdown or reduced growth seems to be due to GST and demonetization policies that came into effect in recent times. There is only growth in front of us and we are ready with that capacity and capability for the future.