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Road Tankers

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France road tax in disarray

The French government's attempts to impose a transit tax on heavy goods vehicles are in disarray following the indefinite suspension of the 'écotaxe'.

The écotaxe was to apply to all goods transport vehicles over 3.5 tonnes using the 15,000 km of the French national road network ('N' roads). Motorway users – both lorries and cars - already pay tolls through the péage system.

However, the tax has been fated ever since it was conceived as far back as 2008 as part of a national enquiry into future environmental policies. After delays due to various 'technical issues' the écotaxe was scheduled to be introduced on 1 January 2014.

However, in October last year then Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault delayed its introduction following violent protests by hauliers, especially in Brittany. At the time, he emphasised the scheme was not being abandoned but "time was required to make adjustments to it".

But during late September, early October road transport federations called for more protests against the tax with threats to mount blockades on major routes. Then, on Thursday 9 October, a meeting with government ministers ended with ecology secretary Ségolène Royal announcing that the écotaxe was to be suspended indefinitely. Most observers view the move as effectively killing it off.

Not surprisingly the haulage industry was pleased with the outcome. "We have achieved a major step forward," said Nicolas Paulissen, general delegate of the Fédération Nationale des Transports Routier (FNTR).

Aline Mesples, president of OTRE, the truckers' federation behind the calls for direct action against the écotaxe, commented: "You could say we won, because we finally spoke face-to-face with ministers who realised the importance of this subject."

French greens were in uproar at what they saw as a cave-in by the socialist government of President Francois Hollande.

A statement by the EELV, the main green party in France, said the current and previous governments had already made several concessions to the road haulage industry on tax and other costs in the run-up to the écotaxe. "Nothing justifies this victory for the (road) lobbyists," they said.

Killing the tax is a setback for France's finance ministry which is desperately trying to plug a huge gap in the public coffers. It was to have generated annual revenue of €1.2 billion, of which around €240 million would have been paid to Ecomouv', the public-private partnership charged with installing the technology and collecting the tax.

Ecomouv' could claim as much as €1.5 bn in compensation given that the 'indefinite' suspension most likely means the project will now never get off the ground.

Edith on the Thames

On 19 October the largest ship ever to enter the River Thames arrived at DP World London Gateway. The 397m long, 56m wide *Edith Maersk* has a draught of 16m and can carry up to 15,500 TEU.

Europe's fight for single rail market goes on

Europe's struggle to open up its rail network as part of a genuine single transport market continues.

New entrant rail operators, represented by European Rail Freight Association (ERFA), are worried about what they see as a 'remonopolisation' of Europe's railway market.

The European Commission's (EC) 4th Railway Package is supposed to establish a level playing-field for incumbent operators and new competitors. Evidently, the first three attempts by the EC to open the railways to real competition were insufficient.

But so far politics has taken precedence over the needs of business and, in doing so, is preventing not just competition in many rail markets, but stifling growth and defeating the EC's stated aim of shifting more goods traffic off Europe's congested roads and onto other transport modes.

For example, in liberalised Britain, freight kilometres shipped have increased 60% over the past 10 years, while in France, where state-owned SNCF remains all powerful, they have fallen by half.

ERFA members, who represent 70 railway undertakings and some 15,000 jobs, say they are increasingly facing discrimination due to "unfair market conditions".

"The barriers and discriminatory practices faced by ERFA members across Europe kill-off much-needed dynamism, innovation and creativity in the rail sector," the Association told the European Parliament in July. "The barriers also undermine the wider interest of boosting growth and jobs across Europe."

The Governance Pillar of the 4th Railway Package is designed to remove discriminatory practices faced by the smaller rail operators. Currently, the governance structure in many European countries is accused of pitting incumbent operators against newcomers, giving existing operators (mostly the large state-owned rail companies) tools to weaken and even push competitors out of the market.

This is often a by-product of the rail infrastructure manager (IM) and incumbent railway undertaking being under the same ownership. ERFA supports the EC proposals for so-called Chinese walls to guarantee transparent financial flows within these holding structures.

ERFA asserted that as long as a financial stake exists between the IM and the incumbent railway undertaking, the IM will continue to have an interest in awarding privileged treatment to the existing rail operator to the detriment of the other users and the whole rail system.

ERFA believes that the entity responsible for the management of the tracks should not have an interest in undermining or blocking other rail users, with which it has no direct financial ties. "This type of treatment is unjustified and is sadly experienced by ERFA members across Europe, jeopardising the very existence of new entrants, deterring investment and going against all serious attempts to promote rail growth," Europe's law-makers were told.

However, despite political rhetoric for more goods and people to be transported by rail, many EU politicians are doing nothing to prevent smaller, independent players being squeezed out of the market, ERFA claimed.

The association kept up the pressure in October when it published an open letter ahead of a meeting of the EU Transport Council, which gathered together transport ministers from the 28 EU member states.

The governance structure in many European countries is accused of giving existing operators tools to weaken or even force competitors out of the market

It called on member states "to end the grid-lock within the rail sector that jeopardises the future of rail in Europe".

"ERFA reiterates its call to modernise the present governance structure of the railways, which diminishes the competitiveness of the rail sector vis-à-vis other transport modes, and hampers the modal shift target of the EU," the letter stated.

"Newcomers' efforts to bring innovation, jobs and greater efficiency on the rail market are deterred and even jeopardised, restricting much needed growth and investment," he continued. "Newcomers are left fighting for survival, rather than promoting a healthy and dynamic rail sector, fit to compete with the other transport modes."

ERFA members say they are exposed to "vast discriminatory practices" from incumbent operators. A number of rail companies have recently joined the Association in an effort to strengthen the independents' challenge the current regulatory environment.

They allege that while track owners are still closely allied to incumbent operators they can be "focused on privileging (their) own operator(s) to the detriment of competitors". ERFA argues that this will not succeed in reversing the stagnation and decline facing rail transport.

"An infrastructure manager that refuses access or offers unattractive slots to new entrants, or practices stalling or delaying tactics with new entrants, is the type of behaviour we are seeing in the rail sector. ERFA argues that a weak and naval-gazing rail sector can never rise to the challenges posed by the modern transport world or the competitive pressures coming from the other modes of transport, most notably road transport," the letter stated.

It urged the Transport Council to keep to the spirit of 4th Railway Package. "A half-finished job will not reach the goal and ERFA calls on the member states to complete discussions on the political pillar," the letter stated.

No modal shift

A week before the Transport Council meeting Eurostat published data showing that EU initiatives to integrate and improve intermodality between road, rail and waterways have failed to yield any significant results.

In 2012, 74.5% of freight travelled by road in the 28 EU Member States, a level that "has remained almost unchanged since 2007," the report stated. Shares of rail (18.6%) and inland waterways (6.9%) in freight transport also barely budged over the period.

Within the EU28, Romania appears to have achieved the best balance between the various modes, with roads, rail and inland waterways each representing about one third of freight.

In September German state operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) launched its Competition Report at the European Parliament comparing operations with the UK rail structure.

In liberalised Britain freight kilometres shipped have increased 60% over the past 10 years

The UK question

The Report suggested that the separation of infrastructure and railway undertakings in the UK has led to a loss of efficiency and synergy. In contrast, it claimed that competition on Germany's rail network is "working effectively". This brought a sharp rebuke from Tony Berkeley, chairman of the UK's Rail Freight Group (RFG).

In open letter to Rüdiger Grube, CEO of DB AG, Lord Berkeley specifically pointed to an assertion by DB that the single wagon business is only operated by DB in Germany, and was critical of new entrants for only entering the market on other more profitable segments.

The letter stated that DB's argument "appears to ignore the fact that other operators are prevented from operating into most DB terminals; one cannot operate single wagon or other traffic without using terminals. It is difficult to see why the European Commission should take measures to support the single wagon market (as DB requests) when it is not open to fair competition."

Berkeley went on to say that, in spite of the positive words in the DB Competition Report, "fair competition does not really exist in Germany, and is unlikely to be achieved until and unless there is either full separation of infrastructure management (IM) from railway undertakings or Chinese walls comprehensively and independently regulated".

Either way the IM must have full control of development, investments, maintenance, traffic management, train path allocation and charging, he said. Moreover, all terminals, marshalling yards, last miles and passenger stations and their information systems should managed by the IM on a non-discriminatory basis.

"I suggest that the growth and private investment that so far eludes many rail sectors in Germany and in many other member states will only be achieved if there is full transparency and fair competition in the market," Berkeley concluded.

"This is not currently the case in Germany, and I hope that DB will not continue to distort the information about the UK to divert attention from these very real challenges in the German market."

The shares of rail and inland waterways in freight transport have barely budged over the past decade

Contargo expands in Neuss

From 1 October 2014, Contargo Neuss GmbH has been renting a second terminal in Neuss am Rhein, Germany, doubling its depot capacity. The company also plans further expansion at the location.

The former Rhenania terminal, later Neuss Trimodal-Terminal has an area of 26,200 sqm with room for 3,000TEU. Together with the capacities already in use on the Flosshafenstrasse, this increases Contargo's total depot area in Neuss to 6,300TEU.

The Rhine barge terminal operator Contargo now has three cranes and four berths at the two sites. It is expected that initially 100,000 containers will be handled there every year.

"In Neuss, from now on, our customers will have service from one source at both terminals, with even more capacity," said Juergen Albersmann, managing director of Contargo Neuss. "We will be using a unified IT-System and operating with an experienced team at both sites, so operations will be integrated even better than before."

Up to 30 September, Contargo used the Neuss terminal as a forwarding partner of Neuss Trimodal GmbH. Following this, Rhenus, the parent company of the Contargo Group, sold its shares to the other partners (Kombiverkehr, Neuss-Duesseldorfer Hafen and Ambrogio). The sites of Neuss Trimodal GmbH have now been divided into two independent terminals.

And Contargo has yet more expansion plans for Neuss. "By the end of 2016, we plan to almost treble the terminal area on the Flosshafenstrasse," revealed Konrad Fischer, co-managing director of the Contargo Holding Company also responsible for the Neuss location. "We shall then be operating with five cranes at Neuss, with state-of-the-art technology in the terminals and for truck processing, and we should be able to achieve a transport capacity of more than 150,000TEU."

Contargo transports around 2 million TEU a year and is one of the largest container logistics networks in Europe. The company integrates container transport between the western seaports, the German North Sea ports and the European hinterland.

In total the company has 25 container terminals at its disposal in Germany, France, Switzerland and the Czech Republic, and maintains offices at seven additional locations in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Japan.

Belgium-Romania service

Pan-European logistics specialists P&O Ferrymasters and Transmec Group have joined forces to launch an intermodal Belgium-Romania service with three departures a week each way by dedicated train.

Running direct between terminals in Zeebrugge, Belgium and Curtici, Romania, the service started on 26 September and offers a flexible solution for moves across northern, central and eastern Europe.

The no-transhipment service features collect and ship capability in the UK, Ireland, northern France, the German Ruhr, Russia, Finland and Hungary as well as Benelux and Romania. In addition, forward shipment by road to or from the Balkans, Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova and Bulgaria can be arranged in Curtici, together with on-site import/export clearance, cross-docking and transhipment into secure warehousing and short-sea connections from Constanta and Varna to Black Sea countries.

Transit times are also optimised by a short pre-advice notice facility. Typical schedules include Benelux-Romania in four days, Benelux-Istanbul 5-6 days, UK-Romania 5-6 days and UK-Istanbul seven days.

Year-round availability will be assured by deploying an own-asset P&O Ferrymasters and Transmec fleet of more than 2,000 45ft palletwide high cube containers and 300 13.6m Huckepack trailers under the direct control of a dedicated office network. Cargo capability includes reefer transport of chilled goods and all the main ADR/RID hazardous categories.

P&O Ferrymasters assets director Wim Blomme commented: "This new service combines the expertise and resources of two market leaders. It offers an alternative to long-haul road transport that is not only commercially viable but also helps customers to meet crucial targets for reducing CO2 emissions."

Ferrymasters and Transmec will deploy their own-asset fleet of more 45ft palletwide high cube containers

Container shipping can forget freight rate hikes

You can forget freight rate hikes; 'sub-economic' rates on the main trade lanes are here to stay, according to leading shipping lines meeting at the TOC Americas conference in Cartagena, during October.

Freight rates pegged below most carriers' operating costs are good for shippers but bad for inefficient shipping lines. Moreover they are likely to be par for the course as a result of the investments made by shipping lines in vessels with capacity of up to 18,000 TEU for the 'unforeseeable future'.

"Carriers who are not the most efficient operators in a trade lane will be stacking up losses from now on," said Poul Hestbaek, Hamburg Sud's senior vice president for Latin America West Coast & Caribbean.

"It's not actually a crisis, it is just the new normal," he said. "The freight rate going forward will be the cost of the most efficient operator in the market plus a decent margin for operating. If you are not number one or two you will not meet your costs."

Freight rates are continuing to go down, which is fine as long as costs fall faster, he added. "We have been going back to our vendors and telling them that if we can drive the cost out of the system I would very happily pay for that."

After stacking up collective losses of more than US$22 billion over a painful seven-year period, shipping lines are turning up the heat on port operators, stevedores and inland logistic operators to drive operating costs down even lower.

Mega-alliances that promise to reshape service patterns and strengthen the hand of shipping lines further in negotiations with terminal operators are being introduced at a time when the world's largest carriers are finally seeing a return to profitability thanks to the slot cost savings of super post-panamax vessels.

Lower slot costs, slow-steaming and the rationalisation of services have helped 10 of the world's top 25 container lines return to profitability in the first three months of the year, according to analysis published by Drewry.

Mega alliances like the 2M tie-up between the world's two largest shipping lines - Maersk Line and MSC on 21 services, and approved by the Federal Maritime Commission, will deliver further significant cost savings, according to Robert van Trooijen, Maersk Line's chief executive for Latin America and Caribbean.

"2M is expected to deliver savings of US$300-350 million annually. That benefit of course will be going to shippers in one way or another," he said.

"It's about improving utilisation, it's about employing the container efficiently, it's about the VSA efficiencies about the way we provide services inland because you can save on maritime costs but if you can't optimise your inland costs then on the product side you are not winning."

Mario Aguilera, logistics director for Cartulinas CMPC, Chile's largest pulp and paper producer, played down concerns about the impact of mega alliances on pricing or reduced competition for his business.

'The megaships are an irreversible decision'

The alliances, he believes, are unlikely to outweigh the urgent need to fill a newbuilding program that has thrown supply and demand off track for years to come.

"As a client, are the mega alliances going to be good? The answer is probably 'yes'. While they are more efficient in the services they provide, it's much better for me," said Aguilera. "The megaships are an irreversible decision. The mega alliances are not."

The main impact of the current round of commercial tie ups and the industry push for lower slot costs, he said, was to put an end to the historically low barriers of entry to the container shipping industry.

"The megaships and the mega-alliances are a way of saying that if anyone else wants to come into the industry it's going to need a very high investment," he commented.

The days of being able to negotiate with niche carriers were gone, something that has been underlined in Chile in the past 12 months with the respective acquisitions of the country's two largest shipping lines, CSAV and CCNI, by German rivals, Hapag-Lloyd and Hamburg Sud.

"Small niche carriers really don't stand a chance. Most carriers need partners to stay in the game," said Howard Finkel, executive vice president trade division, Cosco Container Lines Americas.

Florida intermodal hub opens

US railway operator CSX, along with federal, state and local officials, celebrated the opening of the new Central Florida Intermodal Logistics Center (ILC) in Winter Haven.

The facility, which began operations earlier this year, provides a centralised hub for transport, logistics and distribution serving Orlando, Tampa and other regional Florida markets.

"The Central Florida ILC is the result of strategic collaboration between the City of Winter Haven, numerous state and local partners and CSX to create jobs and further strengthen Florida's transportation system," said Michael Ward, chairman, president and chief executive officer at CSX. "CSX is proud to invest in this important development in our home state that will help to drive Florida's economy and position the state for continued growth in the future."

More than 200 people attended the event including US Congressmen Daniel Webster and Tom Rooney and officials from the City of Winter Haven, Polk County Board of County Commissioners, and the Florida Legislature.

"The Central Florida ILC is a game changer for Winter Haven not only because of the opening of the state-of-the-art terminal, but because of the economic development potential this project represents," said Winter Haven Mayor Nathaniel Birdsong. "Winter Haven is now a partner in the freight distribution industry, and is in the position to serve as an inland port for the global entry of goods and merchandise in Florida. We are proud to be the home of such an extensive project, which sets the stage for tremendous growth in the Polk County region."

The 318-acre intermodal terminal has capacity to process up to 300,000 containers a year and is designed for scalable expansion as freight volumes continue to grow. The terminal incorporates advanced environmentally-friendly technology including three high-powered electric cranes, solar panels and high mast exterior lighting to maximise energy efficiency.

"The value of Florida's transport system is in the connectivity between its many modes," said Clarence Gooden, executive vice president and chief commercial officer at CSX. "This terminal is a model for how Florida's transport modes work together collectively for the good of customers and the communities we serve."

The terminal is surrounded by 930 acres that are being developed in phases to build up to 7.9 million sq ft of warehouse distribution centres and light industrial facilities. In July, Winter Haven Industrial Investors LLC purchased more than 500 acres of the adjoining property for phase one of the development which is expected to bring thousands of jobs to the area and support the freight transportation needs of customers throughout the region.

DHL expands China multimodal rail

DHL Global Forwarding has announced developments in its multimodal services in China and new plans for North Asia.

The integrated logistics group's multimodal solutions connect China to Europe by picking up goods from any location in China, taking it by rail through to Poland and offering last mile delivery by truck or rail to anywhere in Europe.

The company announced a new weekly scheduled block train service from Suzhou along the trans-Siberian North Corridor, to DHL's intermodal hub in Poland, connecting Suzhou with Europe. The service is said to take half the time of ocean freight and is a sixth of the cost of airfreight.

This expansion complements the existing daily single wagon service from Shanghai to Europe, also along the North Corridor, and the weekly block train service from Chengdu to Europe along China's West Corridor rail line through Kazakhstan.

Average transit time is 14 days between Warsaw from Suzhou and will access DHL's Europe network via Manzhouli in China and Zabaikalsk in Russia and DHL's intermodal hub in Malaszewicze, Poland.

The expansion taps into Suzhou's strategic location in Jiangsu Province, an important production area for engineering, manufacturing, high tech, automotive and the retail sector with growing demand.

Roger Crook, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding, Freight, said: "Suzhou is a strategic departure point for Jiangsu and it is a huge benefit for customers to have direct access to inter-continental rail links rather than having to go via Chengdu. Being able to offer multiple loading points across China creates many opportunities for our customers which is why we are seeing so much interest in multimodal services."

"DHL Global Forwarding's multimodal offering is truly evolving into a well-established service," added said Kelvin Leung, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding Asia Pacific. "Geographically, we're expanding our coverage in China. The North Corridor service taps the bustling production and commercial centres of Shanghai and Suzhou, and its surrounding areas. The West Corridor rail service originates from Chengdu – one of the most important distribution centres in Western China and a hub for high tech goods, automotive and other industries. DHL has pioneered the rail service and customers are seeing the benefits of the service which offers reductions in transit times, cost and CO2 emissions."

Broadly, customers can expect delivery time reductions of between 10 and 21 days compared with sea freight, depending on origin and destination pairs. In addition, customers seeking environmentally friendly solutions can also expect a fall of CO2 emissions of up to 90% compared with airfreight.

DHL has also introduced the rail service in a Less-than-Container-Load (LCL) option. Called DHL Railconnect, it allows large multi-national companies and small businesses alike to manage their inventory flows better by sending out shipments in smaller consignments as and when they need to. For customers with larger

shipments, the full-container service, DHL Railline, remains available for customers to block out single containers, wagon groups or whole block trains.

Steve Huang, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding China, said: "DHL Global Forwarding is the world leader in LCL ocean freight services and one of the main actors in the European Less-than-Truck load (LTL), so it's no surprise we have transferred the expertise into the rail solution. We're seeing increased customer demand and we're constantly innovating to help our customers. Earlier this year, we introduced the first temperature-controlled China-Europe rail service, providing customers with temperature-sensitive products year-round access to this cost-effective shipping route regardless of the weather."

The company is also exploring ways to plug neighbouring countries into the network. Using ferry services between China, Japan and Korea, it is looking to move cargo shipments onto the China rail network and create a strong North Asian multimodal network to service the major economies of the three markets and significant volume of imports and exports.

Kelvin Leung commented: "DHL Global Forwarding currently already runs an existing China-Japan-China ferry-rail service that connects China via Shanghai to the major cities in Japan and vice versa. Cargo is transported using a ferry across the East China Sea from Shanghai to Hakata and Japan Rail – the country's most extensive rail network. This enables goods from just about anywhere in China to reach any part of Japan via our multimodal rail-ferry service.

"For Korea, we are exploring a ferry service across the Yellow Sea between China and Korea, and then connecting onto the rail network in China. Once the service is in place, it will position China as a key conduit for North Asia to Europe, and greatly support customers across North Asia with a strong alternative option between air freight and ocean freight to move their shipments," Leung added.

PCC invests in new handling

Kalmar has received a further order for five new reachstackers from long-standing customer PCC Intermodal SA (PCC) in Poland. The new 45-tonne machines boost the PCC fleet of Kalmar reachstackers to 13 units and will be operating at Gliwice, Brzeg Dolny and Kutno rail terminals.

The order is booked into Cargotec's third quarter intake, with one unit delivered in July and next ones scheduled for delivery by the end of 2014.

PCC again opted for the Kalmar solution based on the lifting equipment specialist's experience with intermodal container handling. In this instance, PCC has selected Kalmar DRF reachstackers to work with rail and road trucks and within container yard. The company's main activity is synchronised intermodal transport of containers by regular rail and road transport connections throughout Poland, directly to the customer's door.

The project was partially funded by the Centre of European Transport Projects (CUPT) as part of infrastructure development for Polish intermodal companies. Kalmar's experience with co-funded tenders was an important factor during the procedure, given it resulted in a combination of a technical solution that matched PCC's requirements, coupled with a competitive price. The order also includes a preventive maintenance package for two years, or 4,000 hours operation, for four of the machines.

Adam Adamek, vice president at PCC Intermodal, said: "We have again selected Kalmar primarily because of their ability to meet requirements and deliver high quality equipment on time. Kalmar understands the intermodal transhipment business very well and therefore could tailor a solution that fulfilled our expectations precisely."

Jakub Wojciechowski, senior sales and service manager at Kalmar Poland, added: "The Kalmar reachstackers are exceptionally capable machines. Four of the 45-tonne capacity units are equipped with Volvo Penta TAD1360 EURIIIB engines and the fifth with a Cummins QSM11 EUR111A engine. Our strategy was to maximise container throughput at PCC's various inland terminals and help to reduce the cost of operation, hence PCC also opted for the preventive maintenance packages which help to maximise machine uptime."

Pivotal ships US LNG

Pivotal LNG, Inc, a subsidiary of AGL Resources, has signed a long-term agreement to sell LNG to Crowley Maritime Corp subsidiary Carib Energy. The LNG will be delivered in ISO tank containers to Puerto Rico.

"We are pleased to work with Crowley to support industries in Puerto Rico with the delivery of cost-effective, emission-reducing LNG," said Stephen Cittadine, president of Pivotal. "Pivotal continues to expand its LNG portfolio, thereby reducing dependency on other petroleum products used by Puerto Rico as well as other US territories."

Recently the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued an order to provide clarity around Pivotal's methods of delivery of LNG from the US mainland to US territories. The FERC order confirms that Pivotal can sell LNG designated to be transported by waterborne vessel to all US territories.

To make this possible, Pivotal will load LNG onto the tank containers. The tanks will then be transported via truck to Crowley's vessels in Jacksonville, Fla, and delivered to Carib's customers in Puerto Rico.

In September, Carib Energy was been granted a 20-year, small-scale US Department of Energy (DOE) export license for the supply transport and distribution of US-sourced LNG into Non-Free Trade Agreement (NTFA) countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America.

As a result, both commercial and industrial customers within NFTA countries can now benefit from cost-efficient US LNG. The licensing permits Crowley to export 14.6 billion cb ft (0.04bcf/d) of LNG – the equivalent of 480,000 gallons – per day via the 10,700 gallon tanks to these regions.

In addition to supplying NFTA countries, Crowley will also continue to supply Free Trade Agreement (FTA) countries with the fuel. Carib Energy was also the first to have been granted a 25-year, small-scale license for these FTA countries, a clearance that permits Crowley to transport 11.53 billion cb ft (0.03bcf/d) or 360,000 gallons a day into locations where LNG is an attractive commodity thanks to its low price point in the face of growing power supply costs.

"The challenge for any company in the business of moving LNG in ISO tanks is the flange-to-flange logistics of inland, ocean and island movements in a timely manner to keep the flow constant to the customer," said Crowley vice President Greg Buffington. "Crowley not only has the expertise but also the available assets to make this a successful business, while presenting savings and a greener energy alternative for customers around the world."

Crowley recently announced the signing of a multi-year contract with Coca-Cola Bottlers of Puerto Rico to supply containerised, US-sourced LNG to two of the manufacturer's plants in Cayey and Cidra, Puerto Rico. Carib Energy is also in negotiations with several other potential industrial customers that will soon convert to LNG.

A US export license permits Crowley to export the equivalent of 480,000 gallons of LNG per day

Kube & Kubenz runs tank to Turkey

Kombiverkehr provides direct links to and from Trieste from Frankfurt, Ludwigshafen and Munich (pictured)

The new intermodal traffic route from Cologne to the Turkish port of Çe□me, operated by Kombiverkehr, has passed its initial test.

Kube & Kubenz was the first freight forwarding company to try out this traffic link in mid-September with the movement of a tank container on behalf of a major German chemicals and pharmaceuticals manufacturer. The route took the container from Cologne to Turkey via Trieste in Italy.

"The transport operation went very smoothly and the container was delivered on time," said Michael Kubenz, managing director of Kube & Kubenz, adding: "We're able to save time and money by using the direct sea route from Trieste to Çe□me, as this significantly reduces the overland route by truck. This provides enormous benefits for our customers and also protects the environment, because the CO2 emissions are much lower."

After the filling operation in Dormagen, the container made its way by train from the terminal in Cologne-Eifeltor to Trieste on the Italian coast. There, it was loaded onto a truck chassis before it travelled to Çe□me in the west of Turkey by sea. A truck picked up the tank container with its volume of 30 cbm in Çe□me and delivered it to Izmir, 85 km away. There, it passed through Customs and was then dispatched for the final leg to the consignee in Manisa.

The direct sea route from Trieste to Çe□me is set to become a new element in the Turkish services offered by Kombiverkehr, Europe's largest intermodal traffic operator, in the near future. The company already offers services to the ports of Haydarpa□a, Pendik and Mersin. It also provides direct links to and from Trieste from Frankfurt, Ludwigshafen and Munich using shuttle trains while other sites, like Cologne, act as bases for gateway traffic.

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More door-to-door for Stolt

Stolt Tank Containers reported third-quarter operating revenue of US$137.3 million, down from $139.6 million in the second quarter.

While shipments decreased by 4.3% in line with seasonal patterns — to 29,700 from 31,048 in the second quarter — the impact of the decline was mitigated by an increase in both US export volumes to Asia and Europe and door-to-door shipments, which earn higher rates.

Revenue per shipment was up slightly in the quarter, consistent with the shift in shipment mix. Demurrage revenue was also up in the quarter, as customers held on to tanks longer. Utilisation slipped to 75.3% from 76.6%, in line with the decrease in shipments.

The number of tanks in STC's fleet grew to 33,137 from 32,528 in the second quarter.

STC reported a third-quarter operating profit of $17.6 million, compared with $18 million in the second quarter. Ocean and inland freight costs both decreased in the quarter, due to the decrease in shipments, partially offset by the increase in long-haul shipments.

Hoyer cuts emissions by 20%

Between 2009 and 2013, Hoyer reduced its CO2 emissions by more than 20 percent, the Hamburg logistics group says.

In its sustainability report, Hoyer is publicising its own key figures on sustainability and efficiency for the second time and by so doing, the company is committing itself to its responsibility for its employees and the environment.

The conversion of its vehicle fleet to lower-emission engines, in particular, is having a positive impact on this development: 97 percent of its trucks now comply with the Euro V and Euro VI standards.

Intermodal transport, too, is being expanded and is accentuating the trend; 80% of Hoyer's transport routes are now being negotiated with the involvement of rail or ship transport – an increase of more than 15% in the past five years. By implementing these and other measures, the company wants to reduce its CO2 level per tonne-kilometre by a total of 25 percent by 2020.

As part of its commitment to social responsibility, Hoyer says attaches particular importance to accident avoidance. The number of accidents involving material damage and physical injury has been reduced significantly in recent years – and the company wants this trend to continue. By 2020, it intends to cut the number of such incidents by half. To help achieve this, Hoyer is investing more in continuous training for its drivers.

The Sustainability Report makes it clear that Hoyer attaches equal significance to economic, ecological and social aspects of sustainability. In this way, all transport operations can be carried out in line with sustainability principles. The family-run company sees this as the key to long-term success and a secure future.

Hoyer has increased its intermodal transport by 15% in the past five years

Special orders for Lehnkering

Lehnkering Chemical Transport (LCT), which specialises in logistics for liquid chemicals across Europe, is expanding its fleet of tank containers. The aim is to enlarge the existing fleet with an additional 100 specialist containers as part of an investment programme.

Using the new LEHU BIC code, Lehnkering is now an officially registered and recognised operator for highly specialised new tank containers for transporting and providing intermediate storage for special chemicals.

"There's a relatively large number of standard tank containers in the market, which is why we have deliberately decided to expand our fleet of specialist tanks for use in the special chemicals sector," said Steffen Bauer, managing director of LCT.

As far as the technical specifications are concerned, LCT is taking into account customer's individual requirements. For example, the fleet expansion programme includes tank containers with a rubberised inner coating, V4A stainless steel tanks, which resist corrosion and acids, and customised special designs.

The first insulated swap body tanks with surge plates and a load capacity of 30 cbm have already been supplied. In addition to transport operations, the units are also suitable for use as buffer storage facilities for production processes in the chemical industry. The high-quality, non-rust and acid-resistant V4A stainless steel makes it possible to use the tanks for a wide range of liquid chemicals.

Chemical customers depend on modern and safe equipment and high-quality apparatus is particularly necessary when transporting sensitive and dangerous goods. In the light of this, LCT deliberately decided to equip all the tank containers to make them what are known as "ground-operated" units; this significantly increases the safety levels for drivers during loading and unloading operations.

Thanks to their insulation, the tanks are designed for use in operating temperatures ranging between -40 and +130 degC. Three surge plates minimise movement of liquids within the tank.

The operating elements are arranged practically at the bottom. The driver does not have to operate the tank at the top dome covers when loading and unloading. An additional device for standpipe unloading also enables greater variation in handling. Aluminium chequered plate makes the platform non-slip and therefore reduces the potential for any accidents for the operating personnel. The units weigh 4.04 tonnes when empty and their total permissible weight is 36 tonnes. Van Hool in Belgium is constructing the units to order.

Now that it has received the LEHU BIC code, LCT has become an officially registered container operator. The code is accepted by all well-known transport associations and is used to provide clear identification in transport documents and EDP systems. The Bureau International des Containers et du Transport Intermodal (BIC) allocates the code in conjunction with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

The new Lehnkering swap bodies for specialist chemical operations

Rinnen relies on telematics

Telematics has become an important work tool that helps logistics operators raise transparency and efficiency at different points of the chain.

Rinnen GmbH & Co. KG Internationale Spedition, a road carrier headquartered in the German city of Moers, is convinced of the benefits of a telematics solution. The mid-sized logistics company discovered telematics quite a while ago. Today, it monitors and optimises the use of some 200 tank semi-trailers with an advanced Transics fleet management solution.

So far, Rinnen has been experiencing a number of productivity and competitive advantages, including, lower telecommunications costs, better deployment of drivers and vehicles, route optimisation (including reduced toll costs), asset monitoring of trailers, and measurable and assessable key performance indicators (KPIs) that help cut fleet costs.

According to Rinnen, an integrated telematics solution is "an important internal IT support that ensures smooth processes, in every step of the value chain." It provides information, supports the communication processes and provides insight and transparency into fleet costs, as well as working, driving and resting times, thus helping carriers cut costs and work in full compliance with the prevailing legislation.

In addition, telematics allows haulage firms to monitor carefully all transport processes and enable proactive communications with customers. The direct communication between drivers and the back office enhances safety and allows prompt reactions in case of incidents.

Rinnen's telematics environment, where fleet data are collected and exchanged, is connected to the company's transport management systems (TMS) via interfaces, so that the fleet data can be integrated into the master and transactional data. Speed, proper documentation and reliability are crucial in the transmission.

Carriers like Rinnen are facing multiple challenges every day. It is, for example, key to treat all customer orders just in time, which requires having the right resources in place, while making optimal use of the vehicle fleet by deploying the vehicles and drivers to maximum effectiveness.

In addition, there are several more general challenges to cope with. The freight planning team, for example, always has to ensure that the right vehicle is used, with the right driver at the right time and in the right place. A time management solution can help the dispatchers deliver high-quality services.

Such solutions are based on a targeted, cost-effective planning of drivers and vehicles/trailers. Expense reports and the read-out of the tachograph data (driver card/mass memory) help dispatchers save time and resources. Customers also require details on their carrier's CO2 emissions.

For Rinnen, the integration of the Transics telematics solution into its TMS is crucial. In addition, the carrier appreciates the stability of the hardware and software, as well as the various interface options for communication with the Transics on-board computer - in real time, via web services.

The IT platform has a familiar application interface. A workflow supports Rinnen's processes and helps optimise them, for example, through feedback from the driver and the vehicle. In addition, there are plenty of data analysis tools, including reports on driving style.

Other benefits include better working conditions, an accurate monitoring and control of driving and rest times (both real-time cost and legal compliance) as well as more effective document management. Drivers can for example scan documents in their cabin.

Transics' fleet management solution allows Rinnen to monitor and optimise the use of some 200 tank semi-trailers

Michael Mehlhorn, IT manager at Rinnen, said: "Our telematics and affiliate solutions are firmly integrated into our processes and really crucial for our operations. We are committed to using the possibilities of the system to the maximum and want to integrate the existing features further into our processes to experience even more benefits. The system offers an extensive database which we can use for simulations and 'what-if' analyses, so that we can identify trends in time and react rapidly."

Mehlhorn explains that Rinnen decided to partner with Transics to cope with the rapidly changing market needs. The company chose Transics' telematics via a tendering, whereby all proposals were carefully analysed. Key criteria included a rapid installation in the Rinnen fleet, across Europe, and the solution had to be uniform, multi-language and hi-tech.

Transics will gradually equip Rinnen's European fleet over the next few years, comprising over 3,500 tank containers and around 1,000 vehicles. Mark Griffith, sales manager of Transics Germany added: "Transics has already installed many similar solutions all aimed at helping customers achieve real economic benefits. Rinnen will definitely benefit from the experience that we have amassed over the years."

InterBulk updates performance

InterBulk Group provided an update on trading for the year ending 30 September 2014.

In its interim results for the six months ended 31 March 2014, released on 25 June 2014, InterBulk announced that revenues in the first half had been 2% lower than in the same period of the previous financial year, but that profit before tax (before intangible amortisation and exceptional items) was only slightly behind the comparable period.

Since then, the trend of improving margins in the group's liquid bulk division has continued but activity levels in the European-based dry bulk division have been disappointing with further weakening.

The board still expects to report a stronger performance in the second half of this year, but profit before tax for the year ending 30 September 2014 is now expected to be at a level consistent with last year and, therefore, below market expectations.

While the overheads of the dry bulk division have been reduced substantially during the year with cost reductions achieved in procurement and through operational efficiency measures, InterBulk says it has not been able to compensate fully for either the direct impact of further reductions in transportation activity levels from the rationalisation and closures of European polymer plants nor the consequential impact on our fleet balance.

The group's cost base remains under constant review but it is also adjusting its business mix to ensure a focus on core transport hubs where margin quality and fast turnaround of equipment is more secure.

The performance of the liquid bulk tank container division was encouraging. There was an improvement in margin quality as well as an encouraging recovery in temporary storage income after the unexpected reduction during the first quarter of the financial year.

The group expects to announce its final results for the year ending 30 September in mid-December 2014.

Loek Kullberg, Chief Executive, said: "There is no doubt that trading conditions, especially in the dry bulk European market are tough, but our strong focus on customer service levels and cost leadership puts us in a position to maintain our strong market share. Renewed focus on business selection is critical to ensure optimisation of our network in core regions and greater security on margin quality. This along with the internal reorganisation which took place earlier in the year will put us in a stronger position as we enter the new financial year to see progress in our financial performance in 2015."

Meanwhile, InterBulk's global services have been recognised by Eastman Chemical during its Logistics Supplier Day in Kingsport, Tennessee. InterBulk received Eastman's Supplier Excellence Program Award (ESEP) for customer service and true partnership.

During the presentation Eastman complimented the group's services by saying: "InterBulk is dedicated to our success. Its innovative thinking on key lanes contributed greatly to Eastman's 2013 synergy goal. The open and willing attitude towards our business needs help us both be successful."

Suretank units for North Sea Giant

Suretank has delivered three DNV 2.7-3 certified offshore chemical tanks to IKM Testing in Norway.

The three 20 ft chemical tanks used a completely new design and will be used to store MEG (monoethylene glycol) for Statoil on North Sea Giant for the Asgard Subsea Compression Project.

The tanks were part of a larger project with production schedules governed by very strict deadlines provided by IKM Testing which is responsible for managing the fulfilment of all requirements for Norway's Statoil.

Phillip Murphey, director of customer care at Suretank, said: "This project was extremely demanding because of the timeframes involved and the fact that the tanks were a completely new design meant that teamwork was crucial in the successful delivery of the job. Our engineering, customer care and production departments worked closely with IKM Testing to ensure that milestones were achieved on time and we provided regular reporting to assist in their overall project management."

IKM Testing visited Suretank HQ in Dunleer to approve the final job prior to despatch and signed off the final acceptance documentation with zero issues to close out production ahead of delivery.

When configuring how to best locate and support the empty tank within the frame, Niplast and Suretank designers had to take into account transport loads and acceleration factors. On arrival in the Caribbean, both tanks will remain in their steel frames, but lifted into the vertical before being put into use. This required Niplast designers to consider the axial and circumferential thermal expansion of the tank while remaining in the steel frames.

Fabricated in Niplast's manufacturing plant in Stockport, UK, the tanks were designed and constructed to the CEN standard BS EN 12573, with a 50 degC working temperature and a 20 year design life. They each have a capacity of 22,800 litres or 143 bbl for bulk liquid storage of either 50% concentration sodium bromide or 15% hydrochloric acid. If required, the tanks can be fully drained, returned to the horizontal and transported to other locations.

Shane Gilson, general manager, Suretank UK said: "On our initial contact with our customer, the requirement for a poly tank was requested. Suretank had worked with Niplast before and invited them to become involved in the initial stages of the engineering concept.

"It became apparent in this early stage that Adrian Greenwood and his team understood the complex requirements for the offshore

Three Suretank 20ft chemical tanks will be used to store monoethylene glycol for Statoil on North Sea Giant

Commenting on the project, Christopher Strøm Sundvor, project manager of IKM Testing, said: "We were thrilled with the professionalism that Suretank exhibited during this project. We were working with numerous suppliers, all providing different elements of the requirements for our end customer. Working with a reliable and trustworthy business like Suretank allows us to focus on the management and delivery of the entire project, the open and honest communication from their customer care team was excellent and the final product quality is market leading."

Taking it lying down

Niplast has supplied two storage tanks to Suretank. The tanks, to be used to store sodium bromide and hydrochloric acid in the Caribbean, were commissioned by the customer in polypropylene rather than their usual steel construction, due to the highly corrosive nature of these chemicals.

An unusual, but key, design request was that the tanks would be able to be transported horizontally within a purpose built mild steel frame based on an ISO container specification. To facilitate shipping from location to location, the empty tanks will be held in the horizontal position via a flanged bolted base and a polypropylene lined cradle.

industry and our customer. The Niplast team were dedicated and extremely professional in every aspect of this contract, the tanks were of exceptional build quality and have been manufactured to our demanding specification."

Niplast director Adrian Greenwood added "I am delighted that Niplast have been selected by such a discerning worldwide brand as Suretank. Our designers have relished the challenges that this unusual application for Niplast Tanks has thrown up."

Niplast manufactures storage tanks to CEN standard BS EN 12573 and to DVS 2205, to a maximum capacity of 100,000 litres.

Tanks are butt-fusion welded from extruded thermoplastic sheets, which ensures inherent long-term strength. BS EN 12573 recognises that this technique gives the highest possible weld strength, above all other types including helical extrusion welding. All Niplast fabrication technicians are certified to EN 13067 by The Welding Institute (TWI).

Polypropylene, high density polyethylene and PVDF thermoplastics are used as materials of construction, due to their high corrosion resistance and their stability over a wide range of temperatures. These materials have considerable advantages over some traditional steels such as their lightweight nature, higher corrosion resistance and cost advantage.

Niplast has supplied two storage tanks to Suretank

Alexander Fedyna, Head of Logistics Network Development, SIBUR LLC, management company of OJSC SIBUR Holding

A quick word with...

Alexander Fedyna, Head of Logistics Network Development, SIBUR LLC

What is Sibur's business model?
SIBUR is a uniquely positioned, vertically integrated gas processing and petrochemicals company. SIBUR owns and operates Russia's largest gas processing business in terms of associated petroleum gas (APG) processing volumes and we are a leader in the Russian petrochemicals industry. Our vertically integrated business model enables us to effectively manage risk while driving profit margins and cash generation well above the norm for the global petrochemicals industry.

We purchase by-products of the major Russian oil and gas companies' extraction activities and process them into energy products. We own and operate Russia's most extensive integrated infrastructure for processing APG and NGLs into energy products which are then sold in Russia and on global markets and also processed internally. We are a Russian petrochemicals leader with globally competitive operations serving growing markets for basic polymers, plastics, synthetic rubbers and other products.

How does SIBUR transport products?
Due to the extensive geographic spread of our operations, SIBUR uses various means of transport for deliveries of its feedstock and finished products, including: pipelines, railway, trucks, port facilities and multimodal transport services. A significant part of our transport needs are met by our own infrastructure, which includes APG, natural gas and raw NGL pipelines and railway facilities, such as railway loading racks and rolling stock.

At the end of 2013, SIBUR launched its LPG and naphtha transhipment facility at the Ust-Luga sea port in the Leningrad region to support the growth of LPG and other energy exports to premium markets. The facility has an annual loading capacity of 1.5 million tonnes of LPG and 2.5 million tonnes of light oils per annum.

SIBUR uses the railway for transport of its refined products, intermediates and feedstock, including 100% of our LPG, naphtha and MTBE, significant volumes of raw NGL and the lion's share of our petrochemical products. SIBUR's subsidiary ZAO Sibur-Trans, a licensed railway operator, is responsible for handling our rail logistics, which involves the purchase of transport services from Russian Railways and acting as a rail car fleet operator. ZAO Sibur-Trans handles transport within Russia as well as our export deliveries. We own six railway loading racks used for loading and unloading NGLs onto rail tank wagons and operate an extensive rail car fleet, which as of 31 December 2013 comprised 21,100 rail cars and tank wagons, 6,220 of which were owned with the remainder leased under lease agreements or transportation contracts.

We use trucks to transport petrochemical products, primarily within Russia (for basic polymers, plastics & organic synthesis products and synthetic rubbers) and to a limited extent for export (for plastics & organic synthesis and synthetic rubber deliveries to Europe). We do not operate our own truck fleet but use third-party services from a variety of providers. No single operator handles a significant portion of the group's truck deliveries, as this is a highly fragmented and competitive market.

What logistic challenges does SIBUR face and how does it overcome them?
Significant volume of shipments is run between SIBUR's plants which are located in different regions of Russia. This means that we have to ensure that our planning is precise and our inventories accurate. We have a close relationship with RZD (Russian Railways) with whom we run a punctual block-train transportation scheme.

SIBUR's product transport network is highly complex. The lead time to export markets is more than 60 days for some products. This means we are obliged to synchronize the transportation process. We prefer to partner with leading Russian forwarders who also have railway assets.

In order to mitigate risks SIBUR uses several means of transportation even when this option is less economical. For example, we use trucks, containers and covered wagons to ship polyolefin within the Tomsk region.

What are the most interesting developments you see in bulk logistics?
SIBUR uses tank containers to ship liquid products and LPG for both domestic markets and export. In the past 10 years we have significantly changed the transport modes for some of our products - from tank wagons to tank containers.

The bulk transport system for polyolefin in Russia is still underdeveloped. There are several reasons for its poor development and its lack of investment. The first is that it's long distance. We require an intermodal transport scheme involving railway transport and the mobilisation of special equipment for the last miles. Secondly, it's the technological restrictions that are present. As RZD does not typically deal with bulk shipment in containers we instead need to obtain special technical permission for each plant. Finally, clients are not equipped with the necessary storage facilities and are not prepared to invest.

Nevertheless, SIBUR has made progress in the last year. We supply polypropylene from NPP Neftekhimia to several clients in the Moscow region on a regular basis. We have obtained full permission from RZD to ship from Tomsk and Tobolsk and have tested our distribution system in the European and Chinese markets.

We are looking to see whether certain special logistics hubs will be suitable for operating bulk products in Russia.

What are SIBUR's plans for the future?
SIBUR's strategy is encapsulated in the implementation of four goals through balanced investment and operational activities.

- First, cement long-term access to feedstock through the expansion of existing associated petroleum gas (APG) and natural gas liquids (NGL) processing and transportation infrastructure, and through long-term arrangements with oil and gas companies.
- Second, monetise stranded feedstock through construction of large-scale petrochemical production facilities.
- Third, capture domestic growth opportunities.
- Fourth, pursue operational excellence.

SIBUR is always on the lookout for outsourcing solutions which it is consistently introducing to its own sites. We have already outsourced onsite packaging and warehousing operations at Tomsk-Neftekhim, Tobolsk - Polymer, NPP Neftekhimia and some other plants.

We see huge potential for containerisation and continue to develop onsite container infrastructure. We invite logistics operators to invest in this area on long term operational contracts. For example, we are commissioning the project in Tomsk in partnership with Transgarant.

Today the group is about to finish its investment cycle with around RR74 billion planned for 2014.

The company expanded its railway infrastructure in Tobolsk aimed at eliminating current bottlenecks and support growing volumes following the implementation of integrated projects related to the launch of the second GFU and Tobolsk-Polymer plant.

We are also just launching our RusVinyl plant (a JV with SolVin to produce PVC in Russia).

Reliance Sibur Elastomer's NBR plant in Jamnagar, India (a JV with Reliance) and the NBR plant in Shanghai (a JV with Sinopec) are expected to be completed within two to four years.

SIBUR is also proceeding with the ZapSibNeftekhim project designed to operate a steam cracker (by Linde AG, Germany) with a capacity of 1.5 mtpa of ethylene, around 500 ktpa of propylene and 100 ktpa of butane-butylene fraction (BBF), along with units with a total capacity to produce 1.5 mtpa of various grades of polyethylene (by INEOS, UK) and a polypropylene unit of 500 ktpa (by LyondellBasell, Netherlands).

Quala breaks ground in Savannah

In October, US cleaning and bulk transport services provider Quala broke ground on a new state-of-the-art facility in Savannah, Georgia.

The new facility will cover over 9.5 acres and have a modern 36,290 sq ft building housing four modern maintenance bays and two sophisticated food grade bays, four "technologically advanced and environmentally sound" chemical cleaning bays.

The complex will comprise 6,950 sq ft of offices, excluding Quala offices and trucker's area. Drivers themselves will be able to take advantage of a 2,152 sq ft area comprising lounge, break room and rest rooms.

"We are excited to enter the Savannah market and serve the growing needs of our transport customers across Savannah with broad array of necessary and safe transport and container support services," said Terry O'Brien, president of Quala.

"The design of the new facility will enable Quala to offer multiple tank trailer and ISO container services, including chemical and food grade cleaning capabilities, maintenance, repairs and inspections to name a few. Along with our many capabilities, we will also be offering first class office space and driver amenities."

Scheduled opening is March 2015. O'Brien added: "At Quala, we pride ourselves on a relentless commitment to quality, safety and environmental sustainability. Consistent with that commitment is this new facility in Savannah, which will strive to set new standards and best practices for the industry."

Privately owned Quala has operations in 55 locations in 26 states and also in Canada. The group provides tank trailer cleaning, ISO tank container depot services and IBC cleaning, testing and reconditioning services.

In April, Quala announced the addition of commercial wastewater treatment and disposal as a new business at many of its locations. All waste water generated from an internal or external cleaning operation is pre-treated and discharged in accordance with the Clean Water Act and in compliance with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and local publicly owned treatment works. Additionally, any wastewater collected or transported off-site is done so in compliance with applicable regulations.

www.quala.us.com

Depot app

Lucrasoft has released a free tablet application version of its Depot software.

Depot Image App enables users to create, send and share photo reports from a depot yard or container terminal.

Product manager Bart-Jan de Jong explained: "Using the Image App a photo report is generated in just a few clicks on a smartphone or tablet. After creating the report and uploading it into our secure cloud, it's easily shared by sending a link to the project page. An additional benefit is no more e-mail bounces due to large attachments."

It can be used as a standalone mobile app or in combination with Depot Software. The can be downloaded in iOS or Android at:

www.depotimageapp.com

Restriction order upheld

A US Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) emergency restriction order on National Distribution Services, Inc, a west coast-based hazardous material carrier, has been upheld following an appeal by the company to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

On 6 May 2014, a National Distribution cargo tank exploded while employees at the company's facility in Corona, California, were making repair welds on the tank.

One worker was killed and another was seriously injured. A subsequent investigation by FMCSA found that the cargo tank had not been cleaned and purged prior to starting the welded repair. Investigators further found numerous unauthorised welded repairs performed on National Distribution's hazardous material cargo tanks not done in accordance with federal safety requirements.

On 14 August, FMCSA served National Distribution with an emergency restriction order prohibiting the company from transporting hazardous materials in its entire fleet of cargo tanks. FMCSA subsequently released some cargo tanks after National Distribution submitted documentation that the tanks had successfully passed required tests and inspections and certified to FMCSA that the tanks did not possess any post-manufacture welds. The company has also been allowed to haul commodities that are not required to be transported in USDOT specification cargo tanks.

In September, National Distribution challenged FMCSA's emergency restriction order. The order was upheld by PHMSA's chief safety officer on 3 October.

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Speeding up spare parts

Wilden has launched a new parts kit programme for its air-operated double-diaphragm (AODD) pump systems.

The programme is designed to speed delivery, lower costs and simplify ordering while providing genuine Wilden parts.

Carl Glauber, diaphragm pump product manager said the parts kit programme was in direct response to feedback from 'channel partners'. "We are excited to be providing them with a simplified, lower cost solution for repairing their genuine Wilden AODD pumps," said for Wilden. "Not only are the new repair kits up to 40% less expensive and feature faster delivery times than prior versions, they also eliminate part duplication and so reduce waste and simplify the repair process."

The kits are available in either a Wet Kit or Air Kit, and can be applied to many different pump models to reduce the number of kits required to cover Wilden's products and simplify ordering. Kit variations have been reduced by more than 60%. The new Wet Kit replaces the Elastomer Kit and includes only elastomers located on the wet side of the pump, such as diaphragms, balls, seats, gaskets and o-rings (if required). The Air Kit replaces the ADS Kit and contains a reduced number of parts, eliminating the air valve assembly and muffler plate. All Air Kits will include the air valve spool – which must be replaced when repairing the Air Distribution System (ADS) – and are vacuum-sealed to maintain the parts integrity and cleanliness.

The new Wilden kits are available as wet and air

Pumping shale

Wilden is part of Dover Corporation's Pump Solutions Group. Another company within the group, Blackmer, is targeting its XL, TX and SGL sliding vane pumps at operators in the shale oil industry.

Oil produced from tight shale formations is much lighter than traditional crude oil because of its lower viscosity and levels of impurities. This light composition requires that shale oil be handled and transferred by pumps that have been specifically designed to handle liquids of lower viscosities and particulate levels. Additionally, because shale oil production is a continuous process industry, operators cannot afford downtime, which quickly leads to lost productivity and profitability. Therefore, the pumping technology used for this operation must offer trouble-free operation.

Other features which Blackmer claims make the pumps ideal for use in shale oil applications, include self-priming and dry-run capabilities, leak-free mechanical-seal and ball-bearing construction, symmetrical bearing support for even loading and long wear life, and an adjustable relief valve that protects against excessive pressures. Blackmer pumps are also equipped with replaceable liners and end discs, and can be rebuilt for like-new performance.

www.wildenpump.com
www.blackmer.com

Blackmer is targeting its XL, TX and SGL pumps at the shale oil industry

Fort Vale couplers standing the test of time

Fort Vale is happy to report that its MK3 Safeload bottom loading API couplers are standing the test of time and proving to have a long and reliable service life.

The Simonstone, UK-based engineering group says this is largely credited to the unique design of the extended triggers that cover over 60% of the adaptor circumference. This ensures maximum safety and security of connection between the adaptor and coupler, and reduces the risk of product leakage, Fort Vale says.

Fort Vale's confidence in the expected longevity of the MK3 Safeload's main components led it to offer an unprecedented three year guarantee on all metal parts in 2011. This warranty still stands and the company says it is unmatched by any other coupler manufacturer.

On-going research, product development and feedback from hands-on users has shown that the triggers in the MK3 coupler show very limited signs of localised wear after years of constant service.

One customer, Scott Reiber, manager of Holly Terminal, in Spokane, Washington, USA, shared his feedback with other bottom loading coupler users. "I have been in the industry for almost 20 years and working on loading racks for over 18 and I can honestly say that the Fort Vale coupler is the best API loading coupler we have ever used," he stated. "I have used many different types and some were just trials but this one beats them all. It is well worth every penny and I look forward to many years of dependable service from these couplers."

Trigger design is the main difference between the MK2 and the MK3 coupler. Fort Vale had identified that localised wear to the narrow triggers of the MK2 was a safety concern to users and proceeded to design a proprietary wear gauge. Double-ended, it indicated whether the triggers were still serviceable or worn to an unacceptable level.

At the launch of the MK3 Safeload in 2007, a similar tool was designed with the same purpose in mind. However, it has become clear during intervening years that, due to the increased surface area contact of the extended triggers, the wear on both the triggers and the truck adaptor is significantly less. The result is a prolonged serviceable life of both units.

Fort Vale has therefore taken the decision to discontinue the supply of the wear gauge for the MK3 coupler (part number 94/2120) and advises that customers no longer use it. However, it is still recommended to continue the gauging procedure for the MK2 coupler. For all Safeload couplers, Fort Vale advocates regular visual inspections and a periodical comprehensive check after five years of service or 250,000 cycles, whichever is the lesser.

Now for the MK4

In addition to exhibiting the MK3 coupler, Fort Vale will be unveiling a working prototype of its brand new MK4 Safeload semi-automatic coupler at the Tank Storage Germany event (stand E15), which takes place in Hamburg, Germany, in November. This product development is to satisfy markets whose operating conditions demand a bottom loading coupler with a high pressure rating, namely a 16 Bar internal pressure in the closed position and a 10 Bar open pressure.

Designed to the same standards as its MK3 cousin, the internal geometry of the MK4 Safeload has been refined so as to make the valve easier to close using less force in these intensive conditions. This gives both an ergonomic advantage and effectively eases the difficulties of product displacement. A new style spindle and poppet arrangement helps to cut down on turbulence within the coupler. Both the release handle and the triggers have been re-engineered to render these components stronger and less susceptible to wear and damage.

Cycle testing and impact tests are on-going to ensure that the MK4 Safeload meets or exceeds the specifications and requirements laid down by industry bodies.

www.fortvale.com

The Fort Vale MK3 Safeload coupler

US bulk packaging demand to grow

Demand for rigid bulk packaging in the US is projected to increase 4% a year to US$7.3 billion in 2018, according to a new report from The Freedonia Group, a Cleveland-based market research firm.

Growth will represent an improvement on the performance of the 2008-2013 period as manufacturing output and construction activity recover further from post-recession troughs. The resurgence of these sectors will fuel rebounds in the production of chemicals and plastic materials, which will support heightened demand for related rigid bulk packaging.

Prospects will also benefit from trends that are increasing the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector in the US, including insourcing (also called reshoring or onshoring) and rising production of shale oil and gas. Plastic is the leading material for rigid bulk packaging, with steel and paperboard also used to a significant extent.

Rigid intermediate bulk containers (RIBCs) and material handling containers are expected to see the fastest growth through 2018. "Beyond a brighter economic picture, advances for these containers will be driven by cost benefits over smaller or single-trip containers," commented analyst Esther Palevsky.

Growth will also be boosted by increased emphasis among users of these containers on sustainability and closed-loop supply chains. Drums, the largest rigid bulk packaging product type in value terms in 2013, will register improved growth from the recession-impacted 2008-2013 period, but increases will trail the overall market as a result of further losses to alternative formats, especially larger capacity types. Plastic drums will post above average gains based on cost and performance advantages over fibre and steel drums. Advances will be held back by competition from RIBCs as well as the entrenched position of steel and fibre drums in certain applications.

Non-durable goods markets represented 82% of rigid bulk packaging demand in 2013, with chemicals and pharmaceuticals generating more than 50% of non-durables demand. Through 2018, chemicals and pharmaceuticals will experience the fastest gains, fuelled by a rebound in chemical output combined with the healthcare needs of an ageing US population and continuing innovations in drug development.

Growth in the food and beverage market will be similar to the overall average, helped by population increases, improved consumer spending levels, and favourable prospects for value added food types, such as prepared and assembled products, which tend to contain bulk ingredients that are shipped to food manufacturers in rigid bulk packaging.

Rigid Bulk Packaging (published 10/2014, 341 pages) is available for US$5,300 from The Freedonia Group, Inc.
www.freedoniagroup.com

US RIGID BULK PACKAGING DEMAND (million dollars)

Item	2008	2013	2018	% Annual Growth 2008-2013	% Annual Growth 2013-2018
Rigid Bulk Packaging Demand	5278	5995	7300	2.6	4.0
Drums	1489	1610	1840	1.6	2.7
Pails	1358	1565	1890	2.9	3.8
Bulk Boxes	880	1060	1290	3.8	4.0
Material Handling Containers	869	950	1195	1.8	4.7
Rigid Intermediate Bulk Containers	682	810	1085	3.5	6.0

Drums will register improved growth from the recession period, but increases will trail the overall market

Rising production of shale oil and gas is boosting the competitiveness of US manufacturing

Secure protection outdoors

Denios has introduced another product innovation in hazardous materials storage with the Multistore.

The multifunctional walk-in store is suitable for storing a wide range of hazardous materials in IBCs, drums or small containers, stored on or in spill pallets, on spillage decking elements, in dispensing stations or on hazardous materials racking.

The multi-purpose store is also suitable for large waste, bulk goods or stackable containers. The Multistore is manufactured from weather resistant, corrosion-free polyethylene. A lockable shutter door offers effective protection against unauthorised access. The Multistore is ready for pipe and cable routing as well as for floor mounting and is supplied ready assembled. A cantilever rack system and document pocket are available as options.

Mauser's Mexico move

Mauser Group has opened of Mauser International Mexico (MIM), an IBC and reconditioning joint venture with Servicios Ambientales Internacionales (SAI).

MIM is technically a joint venture between Mauser USA of East Brunswick, New Jersey and SAI of Monterrey, Mexico. It is capable of providing customers with both new and reconditioned UN certified IBCs, with a variety of valves and closure systems for the safe transport of applicable liquid products. MIM is also capable of picking up empty IBCs and plastic drums, providing customers a sustainable solution for their empty containers.

In addition to supplying IBCs up to 275 gallons (1,000 litres), MIM can also provide reconditioned units as either washed or rebottled. MIM sites in Mexico include Toluca, Queretaro and Monterrey.

"The synergy between Mauser and SAI along with the growth of the Mexican market will undoubtedly yield great results in the years to come," said Alejandro Cortez, general manager. "Both of our organisations have consistently demonstrated a commitment to quality and to the environment, which is critical to the success of our customers in the Mexican market. Our new state of the art wash-line in Queretaro combined with the production of new units in Toluca, will position MIM as a very strong competitor in this growing IBC market."

"Our customers understand the importance of having a sustainable packing solution for their products and the formation of MIM will allow us to provide that very solution to them here in Mexico," added Siegfried Weber, senior VP sales and marketing of Mauser Group. "Supplying customers with industrial packaging is simply not good enough anymore. If you truly want to help customers solve problems, then you need to provide a comprehensive solution from supplying new and reconditioned packaging as well as picking up the empty units once they have been used, then providing an environmentally friendly solution with the empty package ranging from washing and reuse to washing and regrinding into PCR (post-consumer resin)."

"Both 'new' and 'reconditioned' IBCs as a packaging choice continue to grow everywhere around the world and we are committed to keep pace with that growth," said Jeff Simmonds, president and CEO, Mauser North America. "The decision to pursue that IBC growth in the Mexican market through a joint venture with SAI was an easy one. SAI's experience with reconditioned packaging along with its market expertise is an excellent fit for driving more growth and helping more customers doing business in the Mexican market."

Tops for high density

Werit says its UN-certified TOPline IBC is the first approved to handle densities that are well beyond standard.

Almost all liquid goods with a density up to 2.4 are now packed securely including dyes, acids, varnishes, foodstuff, or other special solutions. An IBC that is approved to store and transport liquids with this density is unique on the European market, Werit claims.

To guarantee the performance of the IBC in transporting material of extreme density, Werit conducts a stress test in which the container is filled and stored holding the original content for six months. This exposes the packaging to any potential damaging impact from the liquid. After this period of conditioning, the IBC is cleaned of all the residues from the original charge then filled with water and antifreeze. Within 48 hours, the mixture is cooled down to -20 degC and then dropped from a height of 2.4m. The conventional IBC would only have to withstand a drop from a maximum height of 1.9m.

Following this process further tests are conducted for leaks, vibration, lifting, and stacking, and a hydraulic internal pressure test with 100 kPa.

"With this innovation, Werit is the pioneer in offering an approved IBC that can handle extreme densities," stated Kevin Hunt, head of sales at Werit UK Ltd. "With the upgrade of the products' capabilities, Werit expands its diversified product range with a clear focus on quality and safety. This performance enables our customers to transport a more demanding range of liquids in a safe and secure manner."

www.werit.eu

Feel-good factors

Schütz is continuing to expand its headquarters in Selters, Germany.

After just six months of construction, a new administration building has now been completed and inaugurated on the company's original site.

The new building was urgently needed because the existing office complex had become too small to accommodate the company's continuous expansion; the number of administration staff has almost doubled in the past 10 years.

Now four generously planned floors contain state-of-the-art office units with ample space and an excellent infrastructure, so that each member of staff enjoys ideal, up-to-the-minute working conditions at his or her desk.

Ecofriendly construction and highly energy-efficient technical facilities were high on the architects' and in-house planners' priority list, which is why the approximately 3,000 sqm office complex operates a modern heat pump system and is passively cooled by means of a geothermal probe system.

The four-connect ions manifold system specially developed by Schütz Energy Systems made its debut here, to lend an added boost to the highly efficient energy and technical facilities installed in the new building.

Before now Airconomy, the multifunctional underfloor heating system, offered the options of heating, controlled ventilation and cooling, it is now possible to use the heating and cooling functions simultaneously, if required. In other words, each office can choose its own desired individual setting, cooling or heating. This is down to a new product from Schütz Energy Systems, the new heating circuit manifold soon to be launched on the market.

In a nutshell, this means that the new administration headquarters not only offer all employees an all-round 'feel-good' room climate, but also promises maximum-efficiency, eco-friendly, resource-saving energy consumption for years to come.

Cutting-Edge technology for tyre recyling

A Flexicon system helps a leading US tyre recycler raise efficiency

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, approximately 290 million scrap tyres are generated in the United States each year.

As recently as 1990, most of these scrap tyres took up space in landfills or were dumped illegally. Today, many of them are recycled by companies such as Edge Rubber into various grades of ground rubber, also known as fine mesh crumb rubber.

Markets now exist for 233 million (80%) of all scrap tyres. Some 130 million (56%) of these scrap tyres are burned as fuel. Another 56 million (24%) are used in civil engineering projects such as artificial reefs, while 30 million (13%) are recycled into ground rubber. A further 16.5 million (7%) scrap tyres are retreaded.

Of the 30 million scrap tyres in the United States recycled into ground rubber, some 6 million (20%) find their way to the Edge Rubber plant in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, the oldest facility producing fine mesh crumb rubber in the United States. One of the most efficient scrap rubber plants in the country, much of the plant's efficiency is attributable to its bulk raw material handling system using six Flexicon bulk bag dischargers.

"On receiving the scrap tyres, we first shred them into approximately 0.5ins (1.3cm) particles, which are gravity fed into 2,000lb (907kg) bulk bags," says Sam Kauffman, vice president and chief operating officer of Edge Rubber. "These rough ground particles make up 80% of the raw material that we process into fine mesh crumb rubber."

Rough ground particles from shredded scrap tyres comprise 80% of Edge Rubber's raw material

Retread buffings make up 20% of the raw material

Bulk bag discharger and flexible screw conveyor feed rough ground particles and rubber buffings to cracker mill. The bulk bag is loaded into the discharger frame by electric hoist and trolley suspended from a cantilevered I-beam. The wide frame accommodates open-bottom design bags

The other 20% arrives in small bags from tyre retreaders that grind a portion of the tread from used tyres prior to applying new tread to the carcasses, generating "buffings" that measure approximately 3/16ins (0.5cm).

Because Edge Rubber has eliminated manual dumping of small bags from its production process, it first transfers the contents of small bags into bulk bags which are stored, or discharged to feed ground rubber particles, along with rough shredded particles, to a cracker milling process to further reduce particle size.

Moving the rubber particles from the bulk bags to the cracker mills are six automated Bulk-Out BFC Bulk Bag discharger systems with integral flexible screw conveyors from Flexicon. An operator loads a bulk bag onto the discharger frame by electric hoist and trolley on a cantilevered I-beam; the discharger unloads the particles into a 20 cb ft (0.56 cbm) capacity floor hopper from which a 15ft (4.57m) long flexible screw conveyor transports them into one of six cracker mills.

Crumb rubber particles that have been ground in the cracker mills are packaged for shipment to customers or conveyed to the micro milling process for reduction to the finest powders

Kauffman explains: "Four of these discharger systems are identical, one has a larger diameter flexible screw conveyor for faster feeding capacity, and one is a double discharge unit with two flexible screw conveyors that feed material to two cracker mills."

Once the bag is in place, the operator pulls the tied end through an iris valve, which prevents material flow while the bulk bag is being untied and allows controlled discharge of the material into the hopper once the bag has been opened.

Due to the nature of the rubber particles, material flow from the bag can be inconsistent. In order to ensure continuous and efficient operation, Flow Flexer bag activation devices positioned on the frame continually compress and release opposite sides of the bulk bag to promote flow through the bag spout into the floor hopper.

The rubber particles flow from the discharge port of the floor hopper and charging adapter into the 15ft (4.57m) long Model 1450 flexible screw conveyor, designed to handle difficult materials and consisting of a flexible steel screw rotating inside a 4.5 ins (11.4cm) diameter carbon steel outer tube. The screw is driven by an electric motor located at the discharge end of the conveyor, which feeds the rubber particles through a transition adapter into the cracker mill.

High and low level sensors in the floor hopper signal a PLC to activate the conveyor on reaching high level, and turn off the conveyor on reaching low level.

"Before we acquired the bulk bag dischargers, we manually emptied the small bags of material from tyre retreaders into the cracker mills. If our shredder was down for maintenance or repair, the volume of retread buffings we were feeding the cracker mills was not enough to maintain full production speed, which slowed the entire ambient grinding process. Manually emptying the bags was also a very slow operation," Kauffman adds. "Now the bulk bag dischargers and flexible screw conveyors feed all raw material into the cracker mills in a continuous, automatic flow." This results in increased throughput, and reduced inventory.

From the large hopper, two flexible screw conveyors transport ground rubber particles from the cracker mills to wet grind mills for the finest size reduction. Discharge chute (black) deposits the cracker mill grindings into the hopper

Ambient grinding

A typical tyre shredded by Edge Rubber contains, by weight, approximately 70% recoverable rubber, 15% steel, 3% fibre and 12% extraneous material such as inert fillers. On average, one passenger tyre yields 10-12lb (4.5-5.4kg) of crumb rubber.

The rough shredded particles and retread buffings are first ground in the cracker mills (ambient grinding) – the first of two size reduction processes that produce nine particle sizes ranging from 10 mesh (2mm, 0.8ins) to as fine as 200 mesh (0.074mm, 0.003ins). The cracker mills produce particles from 10 mesh (2mm, 0.8ins) to 30 mesh (0.60mm, 0.02ins).

At the discharge end of the flexible screw conveyor, forward of the electric motor, ground particles gravity feed through a transition adapter and downspouting into the micro mill

A cracker mill tears apart scrap rubber by passing it between rotating serrated steel drums, reducing it to various sizes by adjusting the gap between the grinding rolls. The resulting long and narrow shaped particles have a large surface area and are suitable for applications including automotive, asphalt, and moulded goods such as rubber mats and solid rubber wheels for carts and lawn mowers.

Crumb rubber particles discharged from the cracker mills are classified by sifting screens. Oversize particles are reintroduced to the cracker mills while the rest convey to the packaging line or to the next process, micro milling, for reduction to the finest powders. Magnets remove wire and other metal contaminants. Fabric is removed by aspiration and screening.

Wet grinding, or micro milling, produces cleaner, finer mesh particles. "While it produces particles as coarse as 40 mesh (0.40mm, 0.016ins), the majority of the particles are 60 mesh (0.25mm, 0.01ins) and finer. A percentage of the overall throughput, in fact, is finer than 200 mesh (0.074mm, 0.003ins)," says Kauffman.

In wet grinding, the crumb rubber particles are mixed with water to create a slurry and proceed through micro mills. When the desired size is achieved, the water is evaporated from the slurry and the particles are dried and classified. An advantage of wet grinding is the cleanliness and consistency of the fine crumb rubber produced, as the process 'washes' the crumb rubber to remove the last traces of fibre.

These particles have a unique morphology, or surface structure, and are often sold as additives to improve the performance of injection moulded and extruded plastics.

Although most wet milling processes produce particles with a smooth surface, Edge Rubber's proprietary technique yields particles with a rough surface and unique shape for maximum surface area. They offer superior performance for applications requiring strong bonding or high tensile strength in industries such as automotive, sealants, specialty coatings and custom compounding.

Most of Edge Rubber's wet milled particles are packaged in pre-measured batch-inclusion bags that are placed directly into the customer's moulding process and then disintegrate by melting at a low temperature. The rest of the wet milled particles, along with the larger particles produced by the cracker mills, are shipped in various size bags to customers in the United States and internationally.

Edge Rubber's micro milled, cleanest and finest particles have a unique shape for maximum surface area, yielding performance advantages in applications requiring strong bonding or high tensile strength

"Thanks in large part to our bulk bag discharging equipment, we are one of the most efficient scrap rubber recycling plants in the United States," concludes Kauffman.

Finished powder ships to customers

Spiroflow equipment for stormy seas

Spiroflow has helped a major petroleum company make savings on its shipping costs by manufacturing and supplying handling and conveying equipment for operation on a gas rig located in a region renowned for extreme weather conditions.

The bespoke project, in collaboration with one of the world's biggest suppliers to the offshore industry, was for a bulk bag discharger with a hopper, hoist and flexible screw conveyor that were sturdy enough to withstand the most ferocious weather, and which could also be operated remotely from the mainland for up to seven days in the event that gas rig workers had to be vacated from the platform because of typhoon warnings.

Spiroflow was contracted to design and build the bulk bag discharger large robust enough to withstand the elements and safely hold an accumulation of material from the process (which cannot be described due to contractual reasons) so that it could be conveyed safely without human intervention during any time of extremely dangerous weather conditions.

Specialist engineers at Spiroflow took into account the wind loadings to ensure the safety of the heavy duty structure housing the equipment, as the rig was located in an area of the Asia Pacific region where stormy weather is the norm. It also had to conform strictly to safety regulations for working in an explosive atmosphere.

Full design, assembly and testing was carried out in Clitheroe, UK before the system was dismantled, shipped to China and reassembled on the dock before being lifted on to a barge for transport to the gas rig where it was eventually installed and commissioned. All work was carried out by a team of Spiroflow engineers. The company has also agreed an annual service contract.

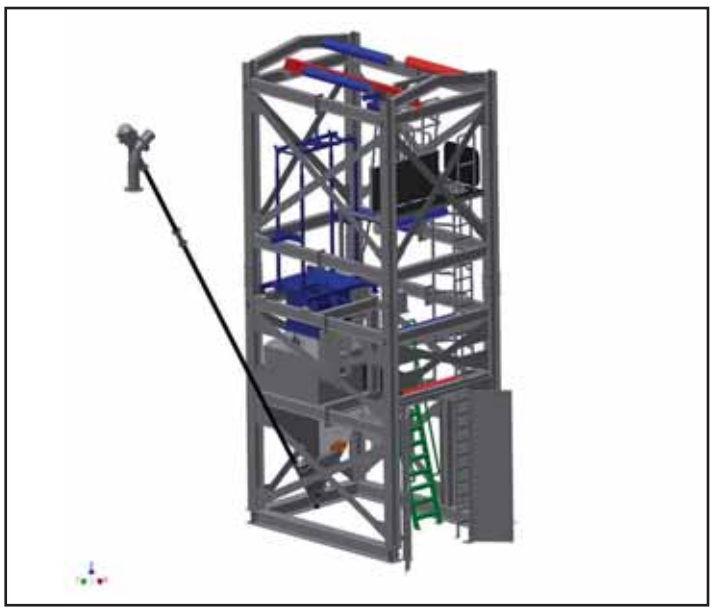
Spiroflow's head of engineering Chris Brennan said: "This project presented interesting challenges and required the application of cutting-edge technology. We had to take into consideration structural calculations needed for a typhoon area as well as the movement of the platform caused by the waves. We had to work closely with the customer and end user so our engineers were living on the rig for the duration. We think the end result is of huge benefit to the offshore industry – potentially saving millions in shipping costs - and a major breakthrough in this important sector for us."

Bulk Bag Dischargers from Spiroflow can be supplied for materials from a wide variety of industries, including food, chemicals, minerals and pharmaceuticals as well as the oil & gas sector. They provide an air-tight operation which empties product with the minimum of residue.

Flexible Screw Conveyors can be made for conveying in any direction from horizontal to vertical. They can also be routed around fixed obstacles and equipment. Spiroflow claims its conveyor system inherently ensures material is constantly remixed by action of the rotating auger feeder, which effectively eliminates the risk of product segregation.

In addition to bulk bag dischargers and flexible screw conveyors, Spiroflow manufactures bin activators, aero mechanical conveyors, tubular cable and chain drag conveyors, vacuum conveyors, bulk bag fillers, ingredients handling and weighing systems.

www.spiroflow.com



Filling guideline

Filling by weight has many advantages compared to volumetric filling with flowmeters or other such devices. Weighing offers greater accuracy, ease of calibration, facilitation of statistical process control and better traceability. Weighing is the one universal technology that can be used regardless of material characteristics or container shape.

A new guideline from Mettler Toledo explains how to use various weighing technologies to improve filling operations.

The guideline addresses end users and machine builders, helping them to assess their current filling devices and evaluate alternative solutions. For end users, the guideline provides a comprehensive overview of the most common filling technologies and terminology. Armed with this knowledge, end users can have a more productive and successful dialogue on an advanced level with potential vendors. The guideline also provides advice for specifying professional request-for-quote documents.

In addition, it offers machine builders useful information on how to optimise the weighing performance of their filling machines. It explains the differences between speed and accuracy, and explains other factors that influence filling accuracy.

The Filling Guideline includes sections that discuss: finding the right filling method; filling machines, including bag fillers; bucket, drum and IBC fillers; and big-bag fillers; more demanding applications; influence of fill material on accuracy; speed vs. accuracy; filling process and control; key filling machine components, including feeders, load-sensor technology and weighing terminals; weighing equipment for hazardous areas, and commercial and legal requirements.

The Filling Guideline can be downloaded from **www.mt.com/ind-large-volume-filling-guideline**

FIBCs v container liners

Greif is the largest industrial packaging manufacturer in the world, covering a wide range of packaging products from steel and fibre drums, plastic pales, IBCs, FIBCs and container liners. Therefore, the company believes it has a wide and extensive knowledge of the 'best fit' packaging solution for its customers.

When considering the pros and cons of using FIBCs over container liners or vice versa, there are many factors to consider. Both offer cost effective, protective, value packaging options which serve to deliver goods to the client in a safe and contamination free package.

The FIBC business by its nature can be a complex industry, therefore due to the way in which the industry has developed, Greif sees a wide use of consumer-developed options which tend to result in thousands of SKUs being manufactured. While this adds complexity for the manufacturer, it also allows the FIBC industry to be a much more customer-driven market with tailor made, customer specified packages.

The flexibility of customer developed packaging offers increases marketing opportunities, multi-load deliveries and smaller batch size deliveries to the end users or processors, thereby, opening up potential supply routes to small and medium size producers or users.

Due to the flexibility of bag sizes, Greif can cost effectively bulk ship products from nickel/lead beads to fumed silica and everything in between in manageable batch sizes.

Filling and discharging units for FIBCs can be as simple or as complicated as required; therefore this system can be purchased and installed relatively cheaply. Minimal space is required for the packing or discharging lines with standard warehousing being sufficient for storage of the filled units. Basic warehouse handling equipment (pallet forks, pull trucks and FLTs) are suitable for the movement of the filled bags within the production process which has a significant cost advantage and flexibility over container liners.

However, having said this, container liners can have significant benefits and offer great value for the shipment of bulk products, where due to the logistics or process requirements bulk volumes can be handled and processed.

Greif's container liners are designed to allow the conversion of any available ISO shipping container into a bulk transport system for dry flowable products, such as powders, granules and food products.

The company's container liners are manufactured from a light weight (coated or un-coated) woven polypropylene fabric or HDPE with a re-enforced bulk head to increase the product protection and security during transit.

The container liner creates an inner skin within the container, protecting the cargo as well as the container against potential contamination and can be designed for both single and multiple trip options which is a significant advantage over standard polyethylene container liners. But it also has greater potential for damage during the handling process and this can have significant cost implications from loss of product and contamination perspective.

Container liners are a very efficient method of loading and transporting bulk powders and granules, as the installation process takes approximately 15 minutes without any requirement for specialist training.

They provide a significant saving on packaging and handling costs when compared with the cost of filling and handling FIBCs as a transport method. Container liners come in standard sizes for 20ft and 40ft containers, but can be custom designed for various loading and discharge applications, for example:

- Loading by filling spouts direct from silos (gravimetric), powders and granules
- Loading through the door end bulk head (pneumatic), powders and resins
- Loading through the door end bulk head (conveyor), malt, cocoa, coffee, and soy beans
- Discharging the filled product is normally done via a spout or letterbox system (gravimetric or pneumatic).

The Greif container liner is fitted with reinforced webbing ties to allow easy securing to the inside the container, with the added benefit of front and rear securing bulkhead bars that further improve the performance and integrity of the product. The company also has a number of custom options available including sift proof seams, hemmed seams for cleanliness, conductive fabric, elastic ties and webbing along with inspection windows, etc.

A container liner can offer a number of advantages over FIBCs some of which are, savings in packaging costs, higher load percentages (bulk volume dependent), reduced packaging waste by weight of packaging versus tonnage shipped, easy installation resulting in time and labour savings.

However, the liner does require a specific loading/unloading bay. Specialist tipping or blow equipment is required to load/unload. High volume deliveries to end users also need specialist loading and unloading equipment). Bulk silos for storage until production processes are also required.

What is clear is that both methods of packaging and shipment offer significant value over other forms of industrial packaging. However, when considering the options, customers have to look at all of the factors involved, some of which are mentioned above, to ensure that the client uses a package that is the most suitable to its production processes, handling capabilities and customer base. One size does not fit all.

For further information contact **flexibles@greif.com**

Flexitank industry absorbs PAS publication

While the flexitank has been in existence for decades, the concept has enjoyed considerable success in recent years as a relatively lightweight form of packaging for liquids to be carried in standard containers.

The carriage of bulk liquids in flexitanks is growing in volume, with 650,000 shipments projected for 2014, up from about 100,000 in 2005.

However, the risks relating to potential damage to container walls or failure of the bag have required greater scrutiny. Attention has been focused on the two issues that plagued early designs – damage to container walls and cargo leakage – exacerbated by the proliferation of manufacturers and service providers.

As *Bulk Distributor* has previously reported diverse stakeholders have collaborated to improve standards, under the auspices of the Container Owners Association (COA).

Flexitank manufacturers, trade organisations and regulators have been cognisant of the risks and have responded with publications aimed at improving safety and reliability. The COA's flexitank division put together a Code of Practice that covered both manufacturing and operational issues.

But in June 2014, the industry took a major step forward with the publication of the British Standards Institute (BSI) Publicly Available Specification (PAS).

Manufacturers of flexitanks are now absorbing the impact of BSI PAS 1008 which lays down a specification for a single-use flexitank in terms of testing materials, performance and labelling of the components. It is applicable to single-layer and multilayer flexitanks that carry a commodity with a maximum mass of 24,000 kilos and volume of 24,000 litres.

PAS 1008 usefully provides definitions for both the flexitank and the overall system. These can be stated as:

1. **Flexitank** - *bladder with a loading/discharging valve to be installed inside a (general purpose) freight container as part of a flexitank system and used for holding a liquid commodity;*
2. **Flexitank system** - *system used for the transport of a liquid commodity, which comprises a flexitank, a restraining system, a GP freight container, and, where necessary, ancillary equipment.*

The overall aim of the PAS is to provide a certifiable framework for high quality manufacture of these bladders in order to facilitate safe movement of liquids without leakage and without causing permanent damage to freight containers. Each element of the standard, therefore, has associated minimum requirements and test regimes defined, specifically:

- the material properties of the flexitank film and, where fitted, the outer sleeve;
- the leak tightness of the loading/discharging valve(s);
- the flexitank system's resistance to a rail impact defined as a 2g (gravitational unit) retardation or acceleration force.

The test methods seek to ensure that the material used for the flexitank bladder cannot be easily punctured and that the assembled flexitank will not leak under normal operating conditions. The rail impact test specifically subjects the flexitank system to stresses to ensure that the flexitank does not fail or the system cause damage to the transporting container.

A secondary, but equally important, feature of the PAS sets requirements for the provision of flexitank system information. Critical for safe and sound operations are the requirements to provide with the flexitank the specification and assembly drawings of the restraining system and any ancillary equipment used in the rail impact test. Compliance with and monitoring of these will counter the practice of substituting the restraining system (ie, the bulkhead) used during the rail impact test with one of a lesser capability.

Certification for operations

Transport insurance mutual the TT Club views the PAS as "a significant step forward in the reduction of risk associated with the carriage of bulk liquid cargoes in standard containers". However, the club points out that it is not legally enforceable and may be viewed as simply a standalone guideline as to how a well specified and manufactured flexitank should be supplied.

"The effect of the PAS will only reach its potential as shippers and/or carriers consistently require certification against the specification and monitor compliance. Safety standards may only demonstrably improve with cargo management differentiation in favour of accredited flexitanks," says the club in a recent review of PAS 1008.

As it is written, the PAS needs to be accompanied by documentation concerning the safe operation and risk prevention aspect of the supply chain. This continues to be detailed in the COA's previous publication, COA - *Recommended code of practice for flexitanks*, which identifies five main areas:

- Container selection
- Testing
- Container and flexitank marking
- Incident management and insurance
- Training

The COA code of practice and latterly the PAS have primarily focused attention on practices relating to the specification requirements and manufacturing of the flexitank. The code of practice also covered to some extent the operational aspects of carrying bulk liquids – and it is poor operational practices that generate a far greater risk to the supply chain, TT Club notes.

Further operational information is available in an ICHCA Briefing Pamphlet - *Safe handling of flexitanks in General Purpose freight containers* - and the IMO/ILO/UN ECE Code of Practice for packing cargo transport units (CTU Code) also includes packing instructions for flexitanks.

Manufacturers clearly need to step up to the mark to achieve compliance with PAS 1008 and the current COA code of practice. Submission of a material test report to the COA website – which few have done – evidences a level of adherence. Beyond that, the shipper and carrier stakeholders involved could usefully self-regulate to these baseline standards in order to increase confidence for those involved in transporting and handling flexitank systems.

This article is based on TT Talk, published by the TT Club. The review was prepared with the assistance of Bill Brassington, of ETS Consulting.

www.ttclub.com

Cargo packaging implications

The use of flexitanks for transporting bulk liquid cargo has grown rapidly over the past decade, and this has been projected to continue with perhaps 15% a year, reaching 1 million shipments in 2018.

Products carried include wine and other foodstuffs, traditionally supplemented by latex and dispersions. However, another recent briefing published by the TT Club points out that the latter, together with newer products such as base oils, edible oils and chemicals, can cause problems if a failure occurs in the supply chain and regulators are concerned.

Two new IMO documents will come into force over the next two years that will have an effect on liquid cargo carried in bulk in flexitanks. While distinct in their objectives, TT Club says they combine to strengthen the regulatory net around a part of the unit load industry that has seen significant growth.

The impact of the CTU Code

The first document is the IMO/ILO/UN ECE Code of Practice for Packing Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code), which includes a section referring to Liquids in Flexitanks and two important requirements:

- The transport of dangerous goods (DG) in flexitanks continues to be prohibited; and
- When a flexitank is loaded into a general purpose CTU, the mass of the liquid in the flexitank should not exceed a value agreed with the CTU operator, to prevent the CTU from suffering bulging damages

The growth in the movement of chemical and edible oils in flexitanks presents a problem, as many of them may be considered as Class 9 dangerous goods, such as fatty acids. Reluctance of shippers to use the 'Proper Shipping Name' for such commodities, as it would preclude them from carriage in flexitanks, would be disturbing, the review states. Correct classification of commodities, together with use of appropriate packaging and adherence to other regulatory requirements, is necessary if manufacturers and suppliers of flexitanks are to take a rightful place in the supply chain market.

Unlike the recently published PAS 1008 standard there is no maximum cargo mass or volume included in the CTU Code. Instead, the responsibility is placed on the 'CTU operator', being the owner or operator of the CTU. Many flexitank operators will adopt the PAS limit of 24,000 kilos and 24,000 litres, but without constraints the CTU Code permits the CTU Operator to designate smaller or greater values than stated in the PAS. A smaller volume could adversely affect the commercial viability of the shipment, while a larger one may place unacceptable forces on the container and the dynamic load increase instability of the container during handling and transport.

There is no requirement in the PAS for labelling the container and in the CTU Code only a requirement to mark the container on the left hand door. Handlers and transporters may thus not be aware that the container is carrying a flexitank – better practice might be to mark all four vertical surfaces, the review says.

Additionally, there is no requirement anywhere to indicate the mass or volume of the liquid carried. Thus, where the specific gravity of a liquid is less than 1, larger volumes may be carried. This would have the effect of raising the static centre of gravity, but may not substantially increase the dynamic forces. In fact, safety may be more compromised by loading a flexitank at substantially less than its nominal capacity.

Method to verify gross mass

It has been argued that limiting the size of the cargo by mass alone, rather than also by volume as in the PAS, allows greater control and complies with the second piece of IMO regulation – the amendments relating to the verification of gross mass in SOLAS (the Convention for Safety of Life at Sea). These will – from July 2016 – require that all shippers provide a verified gross mass for all containers either by way weighing the packed container or by calculating the gross mass.

However, the guidelines set out in the IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ.1474 limit the types of cargo that can use calculation (Method 2) in sub section 5.1.2.2:

"Certain types of cargo items (eg, scrap metal, unbagged grain and other cargo in bulk) do not easily lend themselves to individual weighing of the items to be packed in the container. In such cases, usage of Method No. 2 would be inappropriate and impractical, and Method No. 1 should be used instead."

This effectively means that containers carrying bulk liquids in flexitanks can only have a verified gross mass produced by Method 1 – weighing the packed container. Accurate measuring equipment supporting the container will permit the packer to control the filling process up to the maximum permitted – and would seem to be in the interests of packers and shippers both commercially and in compliance with international law.

Regardless of commodity classification or mass/volume issues, ensuring that the container system is suitable must not only take account of the flexitank and restraining system – the container is equally as important. Selecting one that is fit for purpose and safe to use, free from sharp protrusions and clean cannot be carried out with a cursory glance. CTU operators and packers have a joint responsibility to check thoroughly that the container is suitable and that the flexitank and restraining system fits.

PAS 1008, the CTU Code and the SOLAS amendments should improve safety in flexitank operations, but further steps may be required to ensure this packaging type is adequately regulated as a reliable and efficient system that provides cost effective and safe transport of bulk liquids in general purpose containers.

www.ttclub.com

Trans Ocean welcomes the PAS

With the worldwide flexitank market growing, Trans Ocean says it is fully active in supporting the launch of the PAS 1008:2014. The company firmly believes that the industry will reach new heights through means of professional self-regulation thanks to the very first international standard developed for the flexitank sector.

"Alongside other industry leaders, Trans Ocean has for many years campaigned for and championed best practice in the flexitank sector," the company says. "As such, Trans Ocean pioneered in 2011 the compliance to the Flexitanks Code of Practice. A formal approval process for a previously fairly unregulated industry, PAS 1008 has been developed by flexitank manufacturers and operators in conjunction with the COA."

The primary objective of the PAS 1008 is to provide a framework for the manufacture of flexitanks to a consistent high quality and, in so doing, to promote a safe and professional industry through stringent production, operational and liability standards. Additionally, the PAS 1008 establishes a formal minimum performance standard via a recognised branding, and creates a visible, meaningful and accepted compliance list. The initial focus will be on flexitank manufacturing and testing, with the intention to expand the remit in future.

Trans Ocean has been involved throughout the "democratic and multiple stakeholder process" of moving toward the PAS 1008 during 2014, and has indeed been a key member of the steering committee.

"We truly believe that the development and implementation of a recognised, formal and stringent standard will benefit all stakeholders in the global bulk market (including shippers, receivers, shipping lines and insurance companies); ultimately creating an even safer and more professional industry," commented Pierre Corvisier, Trans Ocean's director of new services. "The PAS 1008 aims to become the criteria for the proper selection then the usage of Flexitanks, for all stakeholders".

In addition to this development, Trans Ocean is also pleased to restate that its flexitank products are completely free of Bisphenol A (BPA).

The company observed that clients and shippers routinely raised queries regarding the level of BPA contained in the company's products. BPA is an industrial chemical used in the manufacture of food packaging (including beverage bottles and cans). When foods and beverages are in direct contact with packaging material, BPA can migrate into the product which, while safe at low levels, could lead to health risks.

Trans Ocean therefore attached a high importance to undertaking a new series of independent tests to reconfirm the fact that all of its flexitank products are totally BPA free. The company point out that all its products are designed, engineered and manufactured entirely in house, giving it complete control over product quality and integrity.

Trans Ocean owns ISO certified design and production facilities in South Africa, China and Malaysia. As part of the worldwide JF Hillebrand Group, Trans Ocean is also supported by a global network of over 2,000 logistics professionals in 83 countries worldwide.

www.transoceanbulk.com

Qingdao dry bulk liner

Available for 20ft, 30ft and 40ft containers the LAF dry bulk liners are manufactured at its own wholly-owned plants in Qingdao, China.

The company says the liners are manufactured "under the highest hygienic conditions", from durable foodgrade co-extruded polyethylene film.

The materials are said to be FDA, EC, Kosher, Halal and HACCP certified.

In addition, production is managed in accordance with ISO9001:2008, and ISO22000:2005, FSC22000.

www.ibcpack.com

Heart of the matter

The Alliance for European Logistics (AEL) launched its renewed declaration aiming to work closely with EU institutions towards a competitive European economy.

Representing major EU players, the members of AEL are asking the new European Commission (EC) and European Parliament (EP) to enable the logistics sector to contribute fully to the EU's 2020 strategy prioritising the enforcement of the internal market.

"The free movement of goods is one of the main pillars of the foundation of the European Union. The logistics sector is essential to make this possible as it constitutes the backbone of Europe's economy. Thus, we need to work more closely with EU policy-makers towards an integrated EU Policy Agenda," explained Dr Frank Appel, member of AEL and CEO of Deutsche Post DHL. "If Europe wants to remain a competitive market, logistics must be at the top of the agenda".

AEL's Declaration specifically asks EU institutions to cut excessive red tape and ensure the proper enforcement of legislation. It also calls for a transport policy to be at the core of the EU agenda for the next five years recognising the need for flexibility and efficiency across all modes of transport.

"An efficient intermodal transport network is the key for Europe's competitiveness. As funding is limited, infrastructure investments should be made according to objective criteria which are tailored to suit market needs. Through intelligent intermodal solutions, European industry and business will continue to invest in Europe which benefits our economy as a whole," said Erich Staake, CEO of duisport.

MEP Ismail Ertug, S&D co-ordinator for the European Parliament's Transport Committee, who hosted the launch event of AEL's declaration highlighted that "logistics plays a critical role in Europe's competitiveness, growth and sustainability. The highest degree of co-operation is certainly the way forward to guarantee a dynamic logistics sector that keeps our goods moving in an increasingly interconnected Europe".

The free movement of goods is one of the main pillars of the European Union, says AEL

Agility signs MOU with Etihad Rail

Agility has signed an MOU with Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the UAE's national railway network. The agreement will enable Agility to use Etihad Rail's services for distribution in the UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The MOU was signed by acting CEO of Etihad Rail, Eng Faris Saif Al Mazrouei, and Bassel El Dabbagh, CEO of Agility Abu Dhabi. Under the MOU, Etihad Rail and Agility will establish "long-term, mutually beneficial co-operation" with the aim of developing logistics and transport between the UAE and GCC.

Faris Saif Al Mazrouei said: "The enhanced connectivity that Etihad Rail will deliver will effectively bring businesses closer together, facilitating more efficient trade and extending geographic markets. Our MOU with Agility is another important step forward for the UAE's rail project. Agility is recognised as a logistics leader and we are proud to work with such a major organisation to further develop the logistics industry."

Bassel El Dabbagh added: "The signing of this MOU has established a solid foundation to build a more efficient and extensive supply chain in the UAE and across the GCC. We are confident our cooperation with Etihad Rail will enhance our service to customers by providing them with an additional mode of transport that is faster, safer, more reliable and sustainable, and enable them to reach remote areas in the western region."

The AED 40 billion, 1,200 km Etihad Rail network will connect industrial areas as well as urban and peripheral communities throughout the country, facilitating trade and fostering economic growth.

The network will form a vital part of the planned GCC railway network – linking the UAE to Saudi Arabia via Ghweifat in the west and Oman via Al Ain in the east. Construction of the project is under way with services between Habshan and Ruwais already operational on a trial basis since September 2013, with Shah-Habshan services expected to follow before the end of 2014.

VTG snaps up AAE

VTG has acquired the wagon hire company AAE, Ahaus Alstätter Eisenbahn Holding AG. The merger enables VTG to strengthen its position as the largest private wagon hire company in Europe, with a fleet consisting of around 80,000 wagons. The main focus of the newly acquired fleet is on combined transport which in turn rounds off VTG's wagon and service range in Europe and closes a vital gap in its product portfolio.

"Acquiring AAE represents a major strategic step forward for our company," explained Dr Heiko Fischer, CEO of VTG Aktiengesellschaft. "The merger of two innovation leaders will lead to the establishment of the only single-source provider of all essential wagon segments for rail freight transport throughout Europe. This will open us up to new customer groups and allow us to continue to address the market segment with the strongest growth potential. Both the shipping industry and rail companies can equally benefit from our products and services."

AAE is a leading provider in combined transport services. The combined transport market continues to grow considerably and experts forecast that demand will double by 2030. Around 30,000 AAE wagons will be added to VTG's existing wagon fleet, which consists of more than 50,000 wagons.

The average age of the AAE wagons is approximately 15 years which is significantly less than the average age of the VTG fleet, which currently stands at 23 years. AAE is active in 24 countries throughout Europe and Russia.

The owner of AAE, Andreas Goer, said he was pleased with the merger. "I have looked on VTG as an innovative, strategically-driven company with clear direction for a long time. I am delighted to be able to see my family's life's work in such capable and reliable hands and to continue to accompany the common enterprise on its journey into the future."

Fischer classified the significance of the transaction by adding, "I am very pleased about the additional shareholder and his excellent industry knowledge. The huge leap will open up completely new horizons for us than ever before in VTG's recent history".

The acquisition is to be carried out by way of VTG shares, a cash component and a vendor loan note. The VTG shares shall be issued in the form of a capital increase. Andreas Goer subscribes for 7.4 million new shares and thereby acquires 26% of the increased share capital of VTG. The vendor loan note amounts to approximately €230 million and the cash component is €15 million. On meeting certain conditions for adjustments met, VTG will pay up to €3 million of additional compensation. Goer has informed VTG that he does not intend to take over VTG.

AAE is based in Baar, Switzerland. The group employs around 135 staff and generated a turnover of more than €200 million in 2013 and an EBITDA of almost €150 million. As of 31 December 2013, the net indebtedness of the enterprise was €890 million. Subject to clearance by the competent antitrust authorities, the transaction is expected to be completed in the first half of 2015.

Brenntag joins UN global compact

Brenntag has joined UN Global Compact, a voluntary initiative set up to promote sustainable development and social responsibility.

As well as being the first chemical distributor to join the Compact, Brenntag is using this step to expand its sustainability strategy.

The United Nations Global Compact is a strategic initiative for companies that undertake to align their business activities and strategies with 10 universally recognised principles in the areas of human rights, labour standards, environmental protection and the fight against corruption. With more than 12,000 participants from over 145 countries, it is the world's largest joint initiative of socially committed companies and other stakeholders.

Steven Holland, CEO of the Brenntag Group, said: "Safety, responsibility and sustainability are central factors in Brenntag's daily practice. This being the case, it is a logical step for us to join the UN Global Compact and to incorporate the initiative's 10 principles as a fixed part of our company strategy and everyday work."

Brenntag has also opened an oil & gas application centre in Jankowice, Poland. The laboratory is equipped with state-of-the-art devices that are dedicated for the use in three sections: drilling, production and corrosion studies.

The centre will enable Brenntag to create new products, perform the quality control of blended products and analyse samples. Special highlights of the centre are its own demulsifier and paraffin testing facilities.

"With this new application centre we will provide extensive services and technological know-how for the support of our oil & gas customers in Poland and the whole of Europe," said Karsten Beckmann, CEO Brenntag Europe, Middle East and Africa. "We see significant potential in the industry in Poland and are therefore ideally located with our new laboratory. At Brenntag, we have an extensive oil & gas expertise especially from North America, which we are rolling out into Europe and Middle East."

The new application centre is directly connected with Brenntag's existing blending facility as it is located on-site at Brenntag's distribution centre, which is the central warehouse for the Western region of Poland.

Vos, Michelin to cut empty kms

Vos Logistics and the Michelin Group have signed a preferred carrier agreement to reduce the number of empty kilometres and CO2 emissions.

The agreement is part of a programme set up by Michelin to optimise European distribution flows of the tires it produces. It is a sustainable means for the group to control costs and secure the transport capacity it needs for its goods flows. For Vos Logistics the agreement is a logical step in its sustainability programme to generate synergy benefits with its customers by optimising the loading and unloading addresses in its networks.

Vos Logistics has been distributing tyres for the Michelin Group in Europe for many years.

The agreement allows Michelin to anticipate market developments and any expected increase in demand for transport capacity in the years ahead. Structural overcapacity will gradually disappear and transport costs are accordingly expected to rise.

Hubert Franck, procurement director for European logistics at Michelin, thinks the more efficient organisation of the group's transport network will produce more than just a smaller carbon footprint and cost savings. "We can also secure the transport capacity and delivery reliability we need. This will be possible only with committed and qualified partners. Given our long-term association and working relationship with Vos Logistics we believe we have found the right partner."

MD for Suttons road tankers

Suttons Group has announced the appointment of Michael Cundy as its new managing director for its UK based road tanker division.

Cundy has worked for Suttons since 2005 and previously held the position of human resources director which also included overseeing the group SHEQ and commercial workshop functions. He has been a main board director for the past five years and a driving force behind the company's recent string of acquisitions, and growth, according to group CEO John Sutton.

"I am particularly pleased to announce Michael's appointment," Sutton commented. "He is a highly respected and experienced member of the Suttons' leadership team and his contribution since joining the group board has been significant.

"Michael will bring an extra dimension to our UK tankers business and his knowledge and skills will be essential as we look to considerably grow the road tanker logistics business, both in the UK and Europe."

Commenting on his appointment, Michael Cundy said: "I am delighted to be given the opportunity to lead Suttons Tanker division at such an exciting time. Suttons has a strong reputation in the marketplace, committed to innovation through its product offerings and developing customer focussed solutions. I will be looking at how we can take this to the next level by enhancing the services we provide and to our customers with a focus on service, innovation, flexibility and safety."

Michael Cundy - new managing director for Suttons road tanker division

Dual-fuel LNG tanker

The increasing use of LNG (liquefied natural gas) as a fuel has been given another boost with the commissioning of a new type of inland navigation vessel.

The *Sirocco*, owned by Chemgas Barging, is a conventional gas tanker equipped with a main engine capable of running on marine gas oil as well as on clean LNG.

The owners claims that what makes the dual-fuel system unique is that it is positioned below decks in the cargo area, which improves vessel safety. This deployment is part of the 'LNG Masterplan Rhine-Main-Danube' project undertaken with the support of the European Commission's TEN-T Programme under the coordination of Pro Danube Management GmbH and Port of Rotterdam Authority.

With almost fifty 50 years of experience and expertise in the transport of liquefied petro-chemical gasses, Chemgas played a leading role in designing and developing Sirocco. Chemgas will deploy the new barge for the transport of conventional gases for customers throughout the Rhine basin. The vessel was officially christened in Grevenmacher, Luxembourg, by Claudette Majerus, the wife of François Bausch, Minister for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure in Luxembourg. Among those attending the christening were the board members of Chemgas Barging and delegations from the European Commission, represented by the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency - INEA.

Chemgas explains that considering the fact that currently the LNG supply chain in Europe is still limited, the use of this dual-fuel concept ensures full operational availability of the vessel. In addition, the tanker has two gas generators which use LNG as an energy source.

Sirocco is the first newly built inland navigation tanker in which the LNG fuel tank is located below decks inside the cargo area. The dual-fuel engine enables the vessels "to optimise LNG consumption to 99%". With LNG as a fuel, NOx particles and CO2 emissions are substantially reduced. As part of the LNG Masterplan project, the emission values of the engine will be actively monitored for a period in order to verify that emission reductions are indeed achieved.

The LNG Masterplan aims to promote LNG as a fuel and cargo for the inland navigation industry. It also formulates and enforces the necessary safety regulations for the use and transport of LNG. It is supported by a €40 million European Commission grant through the TEN-T Programme and is implemented by a consortium of 33 companies and organisations from the public and private sectors from 12 EU member states.

Chemgas is based in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Since 2003, the company has been part of the Jaegers Group, of Germany. Chemgas was founded in 1965 as a barging company, specialising in the transport of liquefied petroleum products on the inland waterways of Europe, mainly on the Rhine up to Basel and in the Antwerp-Rotterdam-Amsterdam area.

Later, sea-going transport was deployed with a focus on the North Sea but also venturing out to the Baltic and Mediterranean seas. The inland fleet is operated via the Luxembourg entity Chemgas Barging. Together with the French partner CFT an additional five inland gas tankers are operated on the river Rhine.

The combined transported volume amounts to approximately 3 million tons of cargo a year.

Rhenus on the Danube

Rhenus Logistics has announced a partnership with Austrian logistics giant Transdanubia. The deal will see Rhenus expand on its presence in Austria by working with Transdanubia to provide an improved logistics service across central Europe.

Transdanubia handles over 500,000 shipments a year, distributing a wide range of products including hazardous goods and automotive parts throughout central Europe. Its client portfolio includes some of Austria's leading organisations such as Schoeller Foods. Rhenus and Transdanubia currently operate three scheduled trailer departures each week, encompassing a full reverse logistics solution from the UK to Austria.

Globalising Rinchem

Albuquerque, New Mexico-based Rinchem Company is expanding its international footprint. In October the group completed the acquisition of Chimei Logistics Corporation, a Taiwan-based provider of warehousing, transport and freight forwarding within the Asia-Pacific region.

Rinchem specialise in high-purity, temperature-controlled chemicals and gases, and plans to use this acquisition to support its growing customer base within South Korea, Japan, mainland China, Singapore and Taiwan.

According to Ken Breinholt, director of operations for Rinchem's Asia-Pacific region: "The acquisition of Chimei Logistics is an exciting development for Rinchem and strengthens our service offering to customers within the Asia-Pacific region. Through this acquisition, Rinchem will add asset-based third party logistics and freight forwarding capabilities and expertise to the local market."

Prior to being acquired, Chimei Logistics Corporation, headquartered in Tainan City, Taiwan, was a subsidiary of Chimei Corporation. The acquisition includes a 36,000 sq ft distribution facility located within a few miles of the Tainan Science Park and within 50 miles of the port of Kaohsiung, the largest port in Taiwan. The acquisition also includes the transfer of employees, a ground transportation fleet, freight forwarding assets, logistics information systems and over 193,000 square feet of property.

In February Rinchem opened a new 40,000 sq ft chemical logistics facility in Neot Hovav (Ramat Hovav), Israel. The facility includes warehousing areas for regulated and non-regulated chemicals and gases. Services offered at the site include customised, temperature-controlled storage and handling of high purity chemicals and gases primarily for the semiconductor industry.

"Our new Neot Hovav facility represents Rinchem's ongoing commitment to providing specialised capabilities and services to semiconductor manufacturers in Israel," said Chris Wright, global director of sales and marketing. "This facility has multiple temperature zones, areas of chemical segregation, fire suppression, spill containment, air exchange and security systems that deliver comprehensive, customised solutions to the customers that we serve." The facility also possesses clean room capabilities for the handling of high purity chemicals and gases in a clean room environment.

Felixstowe achieves AEO status

Port of Felixstowe has become the first UK port to receive full Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) status.

The AEO initiative was introduced by the European Commission through the Union Customs Code to help simplify customs procedures and secure international supply chains.

Commenting on the accreditation, Clemence Cheng, CEO of Hutchison Ports (UK), which owns of the port, said: "Being the first port in the UK to achieve full AEO status demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible level of service to our customers. It recognises the robustness and consistency of the port's procedures, giving customers and UK Customs comfort that the high standards required to achieve accreditation are maintained.

"It is becoming increasingly important to cargo owners that everyone involved in the international supply chain is able to demonstrate the highest standards of customs simplification, safety and security. Ports play a vital role in this regard and this designation gives them that assurance."

The AEO certificate is an internationally recognised quality mark issued by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs giving surety that the holder's role in the international supply chain is secure, and that their customs controls and procedures are efficient and compliant.

Peel strengthens Irish investment

Peel Ports Group has become a member of the Irish Exporters Association (IEA) a group which is widely regarded as the voice of Ireland's export industry.

Peel Ports currently operates at Belfast (Victoria Terminal) and Dublin (Marine Terminals Limited) handling 30% of all containers entering the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Between them the terminals handle around 300,000 TEU every year.

Membership of the IEA will not only open up access to a wide community of exporters and service providers in the Irish market, but it will also allow Peel Ports to develop its range of transport connections across its Irish Sea network.

The group owns strategic port locations in Liverpool, Manchester, Dublin, Belfast and Glasgow, and provides something of a unique Irish Sea hub, further supported by its shipping line BG Freight Line.

Furthermore, the Irish Sea Hub allows shipping lines to reduce the cost of repositioning empty containers, by rebalancing equipment across the network. Some 82% of laden containers which arrive into the Irish Sea Hub also leave as laden containers - higher than the UK average of 54% - making transport in and out of Ireland cheaper.

Through a joined up approach the Irish Sea hub offers a one-stop for container customers, allowing multiple port calls across the Irish Sea, reducing transportation costs to Ireland.

Peel Ports is investing £300 million in its Liverpool 2 terminal development which opens in 2015. Liverpool 2 will be the UK's most centrally located deep water container terminal, enabling direct services to call at Liverpool, making it a more efficient feeder hub for the Irish market, said a Peel Ports statement.

Gerard Gaffney, head of container operations Dublin and Belfast, said: "We are an agile and progressive business and take a collaborative approach to working with our customers. We have tailored the services we offer across the Irish Sea hub to suit the market demand and are dedicated to service, consistency and growth.

"We look forward to working with the IEW in its worthwhile endeavours to support Irish exports in an improving economic climate, recognising the obvious benefits it will bring to Peel Ports Group and our customers."

Simon McKeever, chief executive of the Irish Exporters Association, said: "We are delighted to support Peel Ports Group and look forward to working with them as they continue to develop their activities across the Irish Sea."

MTL Dublin currently handles over 165,000 TEU a year and serves three main shipping lines – Maersk, MacAndrews BG Freight Line and CMA CGM, while VT3 Belfast handles over 140,000 TEU a year, with services from Xpress Container Line, BG Freight and CMA CGM.

The IEA represents the spectrum of companies within the export industry including SME's who are beginning to think about exporting for the first time, through to global multinational companies who are already extensively exporting from Ireland.

Exporting continues to be the locomotive driving the development of the Irish economy. The IEA represents the needs of the export industry to ensure the necessary conditions are created and the necessary support is provided to assist companies to maximise their export sales.

Peel Ports has operations at the ports of Dublin (pictured) and Belfast

Houston calling Antwerp

The USA is an important trading partner for Belgium's port of Antwerp. With a freight volume of 21 million tonnes in 2013 America is by far Antwerp's largest overseas trading partner.

To strengthen the trade relations between the two regions a delegation from Port of Antwerp travelled to Houston at the end of September. There are striking similarities between the two ports, both are home to some of the largest petrochemical clusters in the world.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the two ports is designed to deepen collaboration. After calling at Houston the delegation made a first visit to Atlanta.

With seven out of the 10 largest chemical concerns in the world running productions in the port Antwerp is home to the largest and most diversified integrated chemical cluster in Europe. In addition to the many large investments that have already been made, new investment is constantly needed to maintain development of the sector, and so Antwerp Port Authority makes strenuous effort to facilitate investment, from initial concept to operational start-up.

For example, the American company ExxonMobil began construction of a new delayed coker unit in the port on 2 October. The unit, which will convert heavy, high-sulphur residue oil into transport fuels such as diesel and gasoil for shipping, represents an investment of more than 1 billion dollars in the existing refinery in Antwerp.

In the recent past there have been other large investments by BASF, Total, Praxair, Evonik Industries and others. Antwerp says it has a series of advantages for developing industrial activities into profitable investments: not only is it the main hub for the West European pipeline network, but thanks to its strategic location in the heart of the European production and consumption market it also offers companies a well organised logistics platform with lots of possibilities for transport to and from the hinterland.

In addition the port of Antwerp is ideally situated for importing raw materials and supplying overseas markets. Furthermore the port has a good network of logistics and maintenance partners, as well as highly-qualified dock workers who contribute towards the high standards in terms of efficiency and operational excellence in this sector. Finally, there are the programmes of collaboration with the regional and local authorities – such as FISCH (Flanders Innovation hub for Sustainable Chemistry) – aimed at securing the future of the chemical industry in the port area.

In recent years, however, questions have been asked about the future of the European petrochemical industry now that the development of, among other things, shale gas in the United States has expanded so dramatically. This was one of the aspects that dealt with by the port during a seminar in Houston. According to Wouter De Geest, chairman of Essenscia (Belgian federation of the chemical industry and life sciences), integration is key for the future. "The chemical cluster is well aware of this challenge," he confirmed. "The response of the European petrochemical cluster must lie in even greater integration throughout the chain of value, and the development of products in proximity to the customer. The more integration is pursued within Europe, the greater the development opportunities for the petrochemical cluster."

During the mission Antwerp and Houston signed the MoU to develop collaboration between the two ports. Under the terms of the agreement they will exchange information about issues such as customs and security procedures. They will also collaborate in marketing and business development, and a commercial event will be held each year, alternating between Antwerp and Houston. Finally, the programme jointly participated in the annual Breakbulk Americas conference.

After Houston the roadshow headed for Atlanta, where the ports of Savannah and Charleston send large cargo volumes to Antwerp. This was a first acquaintance in the form of workshops and networking events.

Both Antwerp and Houston are home to some of the largest petrochemical clusters in the world

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Trafigura will maintain an interest in and commercial rights to all of the assets including Texas Dock & Rail (pictured)

Buckeye picks up Trafigura South Texas stake

Swiss commodities trader Trafigura AG has agreed the sale of 80 percent of its stake in Trafigura Terminals LLC, the vehicle that holds its South Texas midstream assets.

The sale, to Buckeye Partners, LP, is valued at US$860 million before customary post-closing adjustments. Closing of the transaction is subject to pending regulatory approval.

Trafigura AG will maintain a 20 percent interest in Trafigura Terminals LLC and retain commercial rights to use all of the assets which include; Texas Dock & Rail (deep-water, high volume marine terminal located on the Corpus Christi Ship Channel), EF90 (a condensate splitter and LPG storage complex), and Trafigura Field Services (crude gathering facilities serving the prolific Eagle Ford shale play).

"This transaction demonstrates the value of our infrastructure investments in South Texas," said Trafigura AG's Jeff Kopp, head of North America oil trading. "Buckeye is an ideal partner for us as (it has) been operating midstream assets for over 125 years and currently operates approximately 6,000 miles of pipeline and more than 120 terminals in the US and the Caribbean. Trafigura will continue to provide marketing and transportation solutions to the producing community and combined with our other splitter investment in Corpus Christi we believe we are well positioned to provide maximum optionality to the market in South Texas."

Buckeye's president, Global Marine Terminals, Khalid Muslih, added: "This acquisition demonstrates our continued efforts to develop new midstream platforms in key areas with significant growth potential. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with Trafigura AG and to position ourselves in the rapidly growing Corpus Christi and Eagle Ford markets."

Citigroup served as exclusive financial advisor to Trafigura for the transaction.

PBF Logistics makes first asset acquisition

PBF Logistics (PBFX) is buying the Delaware City Heavy Crude Unloading Rack (known as the 'West Rack') from a subsidiary of PBF Energy Inc (PBF) for US$150 million.

The purchase price payable to PBF will consist of cash of $135 million and PBFX limited partner interests of $15 million.

PBFX and PBF Energy CEO Thomas Nimbley, said: "We are excited to announce PBF's first drop-down which is an important step in our commitment to delivering growth to PBFX's unit holders.

"We are also pleased to continue to unlock the value potential of PBF Energy's logistics assets and provide cash to PBF for the pursuit of growth opportunities and to return value to our shareholders through our previously announced share buyback programme."

The asset to be acquired is the newly-commissioned West Rack collocated with PBF Energy's Delaware City Refinery and will continue to support the refinery. The West Rack is capable of unloading unit trains at a throughput rate of over 40,000 bpd. It is equipped with steam and nitrogen facilities to facilitate the unloading of heavy crude oil, primarily originating in Canada, delivered by rail. The West Rack is also capable of discharging light crude oil.

On closing, the partnership plans to enter into a seven-year term throughput agreement with subsidiaries of PBF Energy containing a minimum throughput commitment of 40,000 bpd. The West Rack is expected to contribute approximately $15 million of EBITDA in its first full year of operation after the close.

Annual maintenance capital expenditures are expected to be approximately $1.25 million.

The cash consideration for the transaction will be funded by the sale of $30 million in Treasuries that were purchased with proceeds from the Partnership's May 2014 initial public offering and $105 million in borrowings under a revolving credit facility.