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The four largest tank container operators account for 164,355 tanks

Global tank fleet up nearly 6%

ITCO's 12th Annual Tank Container Fleet Survey estimates that the global fleet had reached 848,400 units worldwide at 1 January 2024, compared with 801,800 on 1 January 2023, a year-on-year growth of 5.81%.

Reflecting continued strong demand for new equipment, approximately 56,600 new tank containers were built, compared with 67,865 new units in the previous year – and 53,285 in 2022. However, with an increase in the number of tanks being scrapped, or sold out of the industry, the overall growth in the global fleet was 46,600 units.

The top 10 tank container operators account for more than 297,000 tanks, representing over 50% of the global tank container operators' fleet.

Four operators account for 164,355 tanks: Stolt Tank Containers (50,855); Hoyer (41,600); Newport (38,500); and Bertschi (33,400).

The top 10 leasing companies hold 317,740 tanks, representing about 85% of the total leasing fleet.

Eurotainer and Raffles Lease, which have the same owner, have a combined fleet of 85,000 tanks, with Eurotainer owning 50,000 units and Raffles 35,000.

EXSIF Worldwide runs a fleet of 71,150 tanks, while Seaco Global has 43,000 in its fleet (see p9 of this issue).

ITCO President Paul Gooch said that while the global tank container fleet continues to grow, the rate of growth was slightly slower in 2023 compared with previous years.

"This was to be expected, considering the variety of economic and geo-political headwinds being experienced by the chemical industry, and weakness in global GDP growth," Gooch said. "We also had to reckon with a correction after the record year in 2022, which had been fed by the supply chain disruption resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic."

Last year's ITCO report noted the ramping up of production to meet short-term demand was likely to result in an over-supply of tanks, and an adjustment in production rates in 2023.

"The latest report appears to bear out that prediction, at least in part, although the adjustment may not have been as severe as expected," Gooch continued.

"However, as was already evident in early 2023, chemical companies were returning tanks as supply chain bottlenecks eased and the need to hold 'just-in-case' inventories declined. Operators were also adjusting their fleet levels and taking tanks off-lease."

In line with a general trend by chemical companies to 'de-stock', 2023 saw a decrease in the number of tank containers being held on demurrage; indications at one time were that up to 15 percent of the global operator fleet was on demurrage.

But with de-stocking, equipment was returned to operators (and, when leased), back to leasing companies. The net result has seen a reduction in tank container utilisation by both operators and leasing companies – and more equipment standing 'idle'. Although tank container manufacturers have maintained reasonably high production figures, the rate of growth of new tanks entering the market has decreased, while depots have experienced a huge demand for storage at their facilities.

Local supply

The report also noted evidence suggesting that with China becoming increasingly self-sufficient in chemicals, and its demand growth lower than forecast, there could be a trend away from global supply chains to more local-for-local supply chains, which could present a promising opportunity for tank containers supplying less accessible markets.

At the time of writing the report (February/March), it was apparent that the impact of the Red Sea crisis has been less severe than Covid-19, although the TEU-mile boost (the additional miles required by vessels to go via the Cape of Good Hope) has been significant.

Clarksons' February 2024 Container Intelligence Monthly stated that compared with December 2023, TEU-miles had risen by around 11 percent, as some 620 ships of 8.5 million TEU were rerouting from the Suez Canal to the Cape of Good Hope to avoid attacks launched by Houthi rebels.

The complete Survey can be downloaded from the ITCO website:

www.itco.org

Depots have experienced a huge demand for storage

Den Hartogh buys H&S

Den Hartogh is expanding into liquid foodstuffs transport by acquiring H&S Group.

The acquisition encompasses all business units and joint ventures of H&S, with the exception of the cleaning & filling business unit in Barneveld, the Netherlands.

H&S will become the fifth business unit of Den Hartogh, alongside liquid, gas, global and dry bulk. The transaction is subject to regulatory clearance.

H&S originated in the northern part of the Netherlands as a family business transporting milk. Over the years, as it grew, the company adapted to market developments and customer needs, resulting in a pan-European network of 200 privately-owned trucks and tank trailers, almost 1,500 tank containers for the liquid foodstuff industry, a network of dedicated subcontractors all over Europe, two cleaning stations and filling facilities for co-packer activities.

One of the group's reference projects is with global brewing giant Heineken. This involved rationalising the supply chain so that Heineken has to deal with fewer carriers and can manage more flexible equipment pools. An additional effect is a lower overall supply chain cost.

H&S also works with Roquette, a plant-based ingredients firm for the food, nutrition and health markets.

Bulk logistics for liquid food ingredients and pharmaceuticals products is one of the largest transport modes for Roquette to deliver to its customers around Europe. H&S worked with the group to improve its supply chain and help shift transport by road to intermodal modes.

Ubbo Hempenius, owner of H&S Group, and Pieter den Hartogh, group managing director of Royal Den Hartogh Logistics, signed the agreement on 15 March.

H&S will become the fifth business unit of Den Hartogh

Hempenius stated: "The merger of H&S Group and Den Hartogh is an excellent opportunity to combine and fully utilise our strengths, expand our smart logistics solutions, and further develop our reach. I am convinced, and so are our CEO Stefan Heintjes and our advisory board, that this is the right step forward for H&S. It ensures the continuity and independence of our company."

Pieter den Hartogh added: "Expanding into a fifth business unit for liquid foodstuff is a strategic choice and on top of that being able to do this in partnership with H&S, a family-owned business with so many intersections in terms of history, values and ambition, makes me incredibly proud. We're not just merging activities; we're combining our stories, our dreams and our people."

The history between the two companies goes back a long way, with collaborative projects ongoing since 2001.

Headwinds

Geopolitical agendas and macro-economic headwinds in 2023 were behind a fall in revenue at Den Hartogh, according to Pieter Den Hartogh.

Overcapacity in the market and margins under pressure in the second half of the year, caused a decrease of revenue compared against 2022 and a 30 percent fall in EBITDA. The result in 2023 was a turnover of €603 million compared with €741 million in 2022, and EBITDA of €67 million against €98 million in the prior year.

"We started 2023 financially quite strong, but volumes were considerably lower than in 2022," Pieter Den Hartogh noted in the company's annual review. "The overcapacity in the market meant revenue started to come under pressure in the second half of the year.

High inflation and lower ocean freight rates changed the cost dynamics in the industry, he added. "It is for this reason that we have continued developing our analytics, processes and global network design to consolidate our strong position as global logistics service provider, but also to enhance our cost-effectiveness and efficiency."

Total investments reached €59 million, slightly lower than the previous year, which was in line with market conditions, Den Hartogh said.

"We invested in our fleet, the vast part being investments in new equipment to support Den Hartogh's growth pipeline," he commented.

The drop in demand did result in lower utilisation rates for the company's tank containers. Den Hartogh invested in new-build tank containers for the liquid logistics and global logistics business units and reduced part of its rental fleet, resulting in a slight decrease in the overall fleet size.

Orders were placed for T-75 gas tanks, and almost 800 new 30ft dry bulk containers were commissioned bring the total 30ft fleet to 5,000 on delivery. As well as adding additional 20ft bulk containers to the APAC region, Den Hartogh also developed 40ft bulk units which, in addition to operating domestically, can be easily shipped and railed within the region.

In addition to newbuilds Den Hartogh also invested in the existing fleet by remanufacturing.

The container refurbishment programme reuses materials and is part of Den Hartogh's sustainability initiatives.

The current decrease in demand and increased supply of tank containers in the market provides the industry with a challenge in right-sizing their fleets, the company believes. "This always has been a focus for Den Hartogh, however, one it will continue to focus on in 2024 and beyond," the annual review stated.

Another area of investment is in digitisation. The supply chain visibility portal has been upgraded to share relevant shipment information in real time, while replacement of the transport management system (TMS) transitioned Den Hartogh to a more adaptive hub-and-spoke architecture.

To improve communication with all non-office colleagues, the company invested in a modern employee app. Den Hartogh Inside, powered by Speakap, now connects frontline and office workforce.

New driver communication software has been developed to improve and enhance the communication process, giving drivers more accurate action-based instructions and a better workflow. Mission Planner had been implemented in close to 50 percent of its European trucks by the end of 2023. Implementation in the remaining European trucks within the scope of the project have been taking place from the start of this year.

Workday was also implemented, an all-in-one system that integrates people and culture processes. It simplifies job categorisation, team structures and career growth while offering real-time data and analytics for managers, user-friendly self-service for employees and improved data management.

Daelim partnership

In a separate move, Den Hartogh and Korean chemicals firm Daelim have joined forces in a strategic partnership.

The collaboration, officially established on 27 December 2023, is set to bring substantial benefits to customers worldwide, the two companies claim.

The partnership combines Den Hartogh's global reach and expertise in ISO tank container operations with the specialised knowledge and market presence of Daelim's tank container division. The primary focus is to enhance customer experience through the provision of more efficient, innovative, and sustainable logistic solutions.

Key highlights include a concerted effort to offer customers enhanced logistics and transport solutions in the chemical industry, and leveraging combined strengths and expertise to improve operational efficiencies, thereby offering customers more competitive and sustainable service options.

The two will also explore new technologies and practices, and the partnership is driven by a shared vision to deliver greater value to customers. By pooling resources and knowledge, Den Hartogh and Daelim aim to set new benchmarks in service quality, efficiency, and sustainability in the global chemical logistics industry.

www.denhartogh.com

High inflation and lower ocean freight rates changed the cost dynamics in the industry, Den Hartogh reported

Perolo breaks ground in Jiangsu

In March, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the high-end valve project of Bipu Perolo Jiangsu Engineering Technology in Rudong Economic Development Zone, China.

The project covers a planned land area of 36.2 acres and a new plant and ancillary facilities of 29,390 sqm. It is expected to purchase equipment, such as machining centres, manhole production lines, flange production lines, and casting production lines, which can result in an annual production capacity of 60,000 pieces of high-end stainless steel valves and spare parts after completion.

Cai Dong, member of the standing committee of the County Party Committee, deputy county magistrate and secretary of the Party Working Committee of Rudong Economic Development Zone, Ni Dezhi, deputy secretary of the Party Working Committee of Rudong Economic Development Zone, Thierry Bourguignon, president of Bipu Group, Shu Xueyan, general manager of Bipu Perolo Jiangsu Engineering Technology, all members of the district team, heads of relevant functional departments of the district and representatives of project investors attended the event.

Gu Xinlin, member of the Party Working Committee and deputy director of the management committee of Rudong Economic Development Zone, presided over the groundbreaking ceremony.

Cai Dong congratulated the official start of the high-end valve project of Bipu Perolo Jiangsu. He said that since its establishment, Bipu Perolo Jiangsu has "always been benchmarking the world's top valve manufacturers", adhering to innovation-driven development, striving for excellence in high-end valves and supporting products, and making contributions to the economic development of the development zone.

Cai Dong, Thierry Bourguignon, Ni Dezhi, Gu Xinlin and Shu Xueyan laid the foundation for the start of the project

Cai Dong pointed out that the new high-end valve project is not only an important measure for Bipu to improve the quality of products and services, and enhance brand competitiveness, but also a key support to stimulate innovation vitality and cultivate new quality productivity.

The Bipu Perolo Jiangsu project covers a planned land area of 36.2 acres

In his speech, Thierry Bourguignon thanked Rudong Economic Development Zone for its long-term care and support. He said that from a century-old family workshop to a modern factory Bipu chose to take root in Rudong. In 2015, Bipu planted a seed of hope in the development zone, and now has grown into a high-tech enterprise. In 2024, Bipu will continue to uphold the concept of "innovation leads development, scientific and technological achievements".

www.perolo.com

STC expects a softer market in 2024

Flaminia provision tips STC into loss

Stolt Tank Container (STC) posted a full year operating loss of US$37.8 million, compared with a $172.7 million profit in 2022.

The result includes a loss provision of $155 million (net profit impact of $115 million) related to the MSC Flaminia incident in 2012.

Transport revenue decreased 25.5 percent to $699.5 million having increased 30.8 percent in the prior year. Transport rates decreased, although this was slightly offset by an increase in overall volumes. Demurrage revenue fell back in

2023 against 2022 as supply chain bottlenecks eased and tanks on demurrage declined in the second half of the year.

Operating costs were down by 25 percent as ocean and inland freight costs were also lower during the year. Following the historical highs of the past few years, freight carrier rates have returned to pre-Covid levels, noted STC president Hans Augusteijn in the Stolt-Nielsen annual report.

"The container and logistics market remained competitive in 2023," he stated. "Softer market demand increased competition and put pressure on margins, so we worked on increasing our volumes. To support this, we added 3,900 tanks to our fleet, which increased in size to 50,900 (8.4 percent). Our team kept our competitive edge by providing best-in-class digital tools and service to our customers. Our focus moving forward is to optimise the way we manage costs and improve efficiencies."

STC expects a softer market in 2024 to influence revenue and earnings. But the operator should benefit from ongoing growth and investments in digital infrastructure.

"We are starting to run higher volumes with more efficiency due to our scalable

platform and expect this trend to continue," Augusteijn stated. "Although the short-term outlook is challenging, all that we have achieved in 2023 has laid the foundations for us to deliver another successful year in 2024 with results returning to pre-Covid levels."

www.stolt-nielsen.com

Bertschi backs European Industrial Deal

By endorsing the European Industrial Deal, Bertschi says it is reaffirming its commitment to a greener, more competitive European landscape

Bertschi Group is endorsing the Antwerp Declaration for a European Industrial Deal, joining over 500 signatories across 20 sectors in a united call for action.

The declaration, aimed at complementing the European Green Deal, emphasises the critical role of industry in achieving climate neutrality while preserving high-quality jobs for European workers.

"The European Industrial Deal represents a necessity for collaboration and innovation in addressing the pressing challenges of our time," said Jan Arnet, CEO of Bertschi Group. "By uniting behind this shared vision, we support the urgent need for clarity, predictability, and confidence in Europe, its industrial policy, and a secure and sustainable future for generations to come."

Specialising in providing sustainable and efficient logistics solutions for the chemical industry, Bertschi Group understands the importance of sustainability and resilience in industrial operations. By endorsing the European Industrial Deal, the company says it is reaffirming its commitment to supporting the transition towards a greener, more competitive European industrial landscape.

"As a logistics company deeply committed to sustainability, we recognise that prioritising investment in rail infrastructure and using alternative energy sources significantly reduce carbon emissions and contribute to a greener future for Europe. To enable the success of the European Green Deal, a European Industrial Deal on same level needs to be adopted," said Hans-Jörg Bertschi, chairman of Bertschi Group.

Central to the declaration are 10 key calls to action, including targeting infrastructure development to catalyse industrial transformation and enhance cross-border connectivity. Additionally, there is a focus on elevating competitiveness as a strategic priority, implementing a strong public funding chapter for clean technologies and prioritising affordable and abundant low-carbon energy.

Furthermore, the declaration advocates for leveraging the single market, fostering innovation, and ensuring streamlined law-making processes. It also emphasises the need for cohesive leadership and integrated approaches within the European Commission.

Volume declines

Volume declines that began a year earlier continued in 2023, Bertschi said in its annual review.

The chemical industry, the group's main customer sector, continued to suffer from high gas/electricity prices and generally weak sales in Europe. This led to significant declines in European transport volumes.

In Bertschi's overseas transport business, the sharp rise in shipping prices during the COVID-19 phase has normalised. With supply chains regaining smoother operations in 2023, some overcapacity became apparent. These factors put pressure on margins, accentuated by a stronger Swiss franc.

As a result, sales fell significantly by 15 percent to CHF960 million.

"Following a record year in 2022, we faced a more challenging economic environment last year. Nevertheless, we are satisfied that we were able to achieve a positive business result despite these economic headwinds," said Hans-Jörg Bertschi.

Green supply chains

With innovative customer pilot projects, several near CO2-neutral door-to-door supply chains across Europe were implemented in 2023 by linking intermodal rail transport with trucks powered by biofuels.

Bertschi already handles 90 percent of all European land transports via intermodal rail transport, thereby reducing CO2 emissions by 230,000 tonnes a year. The focus of these projects was on optimising the first and last mile of the supply chain, which are handled by road. Hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) is used as a fuel to power both the terminal vehicles and the trucks. This allows CO2 emissions to be reduced by up to 90 percent compared with conventional road transport.

Following these implementations, the concept is to be extended to other supply chains, important steps for Bertschi to achieve CO2-neutral production by 2050.

Zhangjiagang

After several years of planning, approval and construction, Bertschi officially opened its new chemical logistics centre in Zhangjiagang, China in mid-2023 with a ceremony attended by customers, political representatives, and employees.

The storage and filling centre has a capacity of 25,000 tonnes of liquid products stored in tank containers and 25,000 tonnes of packaged goods as well as automatic filling systems. The site is located in the Yangtze River Delta, in close proximity to Shanghai.

"The new hub enables us to support our customers locally with their expansion plans in China and further develop the import market for liquid speciality chemicals. It also ideally complements Bertschi's global logistics network and enables worldwide door-to-door supply chain solutions," explained CEO Jan Arnet.

In addition to this largest single investment in the company's history, Bertschi also pushed ahead with various logistics infrastructure projects in Europe and continued to invest in the expansion of its container fleet. The fleet grew by 7 percent to 44,000 units in 2023.

Major progress was also made in the company's digital transformation. This has enabled Bertschi to consolidate its position in terms of visibility and connectivity in chemical logistics chains. In European transport, for example, customers are informed of deviations from planned data in real time via the automated transmission of scheduled arrival dates and therefore have full transparency regarding the delivery status of their products. Another milestone is about to be reached with the planned replacement of the previous systems for global transport planning and processing with a fully integrated, innovative in-house development in 2024.

Challenging year

The global economic situation is likely to remain challenging in 2024, influenced by geopolitical uncertainties, the group predicts. Bertschi's global business in particular is therefore proving to be increasingly volatile and challenging this year.

In contrast, the decline in transport volumes caused by the recession in European industry is expected to have bottomed out by the second half of 2023. Demand in Bertschi's European business is likely to stabilise at relatively low levels in 2024. "The renewed increase in global supply chain disruptions at the start of 2024, the major geopolitical uncertainties, and the volatility in the markets make it difficult for us and our customers to provide an outlook," Arnet added.

"One positive effect should be that customers are increasingly setting up containerised safety stocks with us so that they can access their products flexibly and promptly."

Bertschi also wants to take another step towards its goal of CO2 neutrality by 2050. Following initial trials in Scandinavia and Germany last year, the first electrically powered heavy 40-tonne trucks will now be used at the Birrfeld, Switzerland intermodal rail terminal and electric charging stations will be installed. The aim is to develop and implement further 'net zero' concepts.

Bertschi is also investing heavily in the expansion of European infrastructure for road, rail and water. A large trimodal transhipment terminal with container storage infrastructure - including dangerous goods - is currently under construction in Antwerp, and will begin operations in the second half of this year.

Handling and storage capacities at the Bertschi

The global economic situation is likely to remain challenging in 2024

trimodal terminal in Rotterdam will be significantly expanded with the installation of a second gantry crane. Due to the ongoing geographical diversification of global supply chains, Bertschi expects demand for these new capacities to increase over the next few years.

Meanwhile, in addition to investing in the expansion of the container fleet, the main focus in global business is on the successful implementation of door-to-door logistics concepts.

With the new hub in Zhangjiagang and the existing chemical hubs in Singapore and Europe, Bertschi says it offers its customers a first-class network to optimise the costs and customer benefits of global supply chains and increase their efficiency.

Bertschi's close-knit infrastructure in Europe creates exciting opportunities to integrate the storage and distribution of products on the continent into global flows.

A partnership with the Uyeno Group, of Japan, which was launched in 2023, will contribute to the expansion of the global network. The joint venture with the major Japanese family-owned chemical logistics and trading company will commence operations this year and enable further growth in the Japanese market for tank container services.

Liquids unit appointment

Barry Mol has been appointed as the new managing director of Bertschi's European business unit liquids

Mol's track record within Bertschi spans operations, business development, and a tenure as subsidiary manager of Bertschi Netherlands.

He takes over from Santiago Gonzalez Prats after a six-year tenure. Prats is to resume his role as managing director of Bertschi Spain and Portugal. Additionally, at the group level, he will focus on developing the West Mediterranean region and the intermodal axle to and from Spain.

www.bertschi.com

Suttons evolution

Suttons has recently seen an evolution of its strapline to align to its environmental, social, and corporate governance strategy. The strapline is 'Delivering life's essentials safely and sustainably'.

The bulk logistics provider is committed to driving positive change by promoting sustainable practices and minimising its environmental impact in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The International division received a Silver sustainability rating from EcoVadis.

Suttons is a big user of alternative fuels in the bulk haulage industry and its recent HVO trial delivered an 80 percent reduction in carbon emissions. It is also using 100 percent renewable electricity at all its owned sites, significantly reducing its Scope 2 emissions.

The company's UK tanker division has been reducing emissions year on year through a combination of fleet investment and improvement in driving style. Its fleet has reduced CO2 emissions by 13,900 tonnes, equivalent to removing over 3,000 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles from the road for a year.

"The evolution of our strapline marks an exciting time for our business and we are already seeing excellent results through our commitment to sustainability," said CEO John Sutton. "The logistics industry has a huge responsibility to pave the way for a greener future and I am proud that Suttons is at the forefront of this movement."

www.suttonsgroup.com

New COO for Leschaco

Nils Fahrenholz has assumed the role of chief operating officer at Leschaco Group following the retirement of Oliver Oestreich.

Fahrenholz was appointed incoming COO on 1 April 2023, joining the management board at the same time. He was closely supported by Oestreich to ensure an optimum transition.

For his part, Oestreich has been a formidable figure of the Leschaco Group for more than 21 years, contributing significantly to the company's growth and success.

During his tenure, he played a pivotal role in expanding the group's global footprint and fostering a culture of excellence within the organisation.

"We feel gratitude to Oliver for his valued contributions and exemplary leadership over the past two decades," said Constantin Conrad, CEO. "His vision, integrity and passion have been key in shaping the development of the company and positioning us for continued success."

Over the years, Fahrenholz has held key positions in corporate functions and local country positions across different regions. His most recent role was as managing director of Leschaco Singapore.

"Nils Fahrenholz's appointment as COO marks a significant milestone for the Leschaco Group," added Constantin Conrad. "Nils is one of us. He started his career with Leschaco and so his deep understanding of our company and business, combined with his innovative approach and steadfast commitment to our values, make him the ideal fit for this role and the succession of Oliver."

Nils Fahrenholz, COO Leschaco

www.leschaco.com

Combined transport faces difficult framework

In 2023, Hupac Group moved around 975,000 road consignments in combined road/rail transport.

However, the transport operator warned that environmentally-friendly combined transport is coming under increased pressure due to declining demand for transport in Europe, price increases in the rail system that are not in line with the market and considerable quality deficits along the German rail network.

The 975,000 road consignments equates to nearly 1.9 million TEU in combined road/rail and maritime hinterland transport. This represented a decrease of about 130,000 consignments, or 11.7 percent, compared with the previous year.

All transport segments of Hupac's Europe-wide network were affected by this negative development, albeit to varying degrees. In the core transalpine market through Switzerland, Hupac recorded a comparatively moderate decline of 7.6 percent to 540,000 road consignments.

The market has had to battle with declining demand for transport in Europe. The recessionary trend started in the autumn of 2022 in connection with the Ukraine and the energy crisis, and affected large parts of the world economy in the course of 2023.

To make matters worse, a number of factors have put increasing pressure on the rail system. First and foremost, is the "poor quality of the rail network, especially in Germany, due to neglected maintenance and inadequate national and international construction planning," Hupac noted in its review of 2023.

Capacity bottlenecks, delays and cancellations are the order of the day on many corridors. The serious accident in the Gotthard base tunnel in August was an additional exceptional factor. The complete closure of one of the two tunnel tubes until September 2024 significantly reduces the capacity of the line.

"Fortunately, the impact on rail freight transport is limited, as good solutions have been found together with SBB (Swiss Railways)," said Michail

The market has had to battle with declining demand for transport in Europe

Stahlhut, CEO of Hupac Group. "We expect that the forthcoming necessary general overhaul of the German rail network will be organised in a market-compatible manner so as not to nip the politically desired turnaround in transport in the bud."

Rising costs, falling subsidies

The massive double-digit cost increases in the rail system are also counterproductive, the group maintained. High track and traction costs are out of all proportion to the service provided.

"We must do everything we can to stop the trend of shifting traffic back from rail to road," Stahlhut continued. Instead, the system "is being deprived" of the support it urgently needs, especially in times of crisis. The current, unplanned significant reduction in track access charge subsidies in Germany is worsening the framework conditions for combined transport and, given the current margin situation, "will inevitably lead to the additional costs being passed on to the market".

Modal shift

On the other hand, the Swiss Federal Office of Transport's subsidy policy is to be viewed positively. The support measures are stable and therefore have an anti-cyclical effect, which creates confidence and supports the market in the long term. This makes it all the more important to continue to support transalpine combined transport in the coming years.

"The planned focus on short-distance transalpine transport from southern Germany and Switzerland must not be at the expense of other segments," stated Hans-Jörg Bertschi, chairman of Hupac. Long-distance transport in particular is threatened by reverse modal shift due to the tense performance conditions and should continue to be supported.

Infrastructure measures to ensure capacity and stability on the north-south corridor are just as important as market-oriented financing. "The Lauterbourg-Strasbourg-Basel and Antwerp-Metz-Basel routes are crucial for further progress in modal shift: they represent an alternative to the Rhine Valley railway and should be developed as a priority for freight transport," Bertschi added.

Smaller measures, such as the provision of sidings, can also provide some relief. Here, trains can wait to continue their journey in the event of disruptions, rather than being prevented from departing. Sidings are already in place near Dottikon and can be activated.

Strategy for the future

Despite the current difficult economic situation, Hupac is sticking to its strategy for the further development of combined transport. The European network is adapting to market demand as the situation requires.

"In some cases, we have temporarily consolidated departures," explained Alessandro Valenti, director of Shuttle Net. "Other services have been expanded, such as the Benelux-Italy corridor with additional departures between Zeebrugge and Novara and Busto Arsizio and a new service to Piacenza from February 2024." Another new development is an increase in frequency on the Rotterdam-Warsaw/Brwinów route.

In addition, Hupac is working on factors that will strengthen the productivity and competitiveness of combined transport in the long term. "Longer, heavier trains, efficient terminals, strengthening competition by promoting private railway companies and digital transformation are the most important keywords for the success of combined transport," said Stahlhut. In addition, major investments are being made in terminal locations in Italy, Germany and Spain.

www.hupac.com

Van Hool's unlikely story

In 2015, it seemed improbable. Chemicals giant BASF had been looking to reconfigure in-plant logistics at its Ludwigshafen, Germany site. For decades, product was shuttled between the site's various production facilities using rail tank wagons. But this was improving increasingly costly and time-consuming.

The answer came in the form of a 45t tank container with a volume of 63,000 litres and maximum permissible total weight of 75 tonnes, double that of the average tank container.

Belgian equipment manufacturer Van Hool collaborated with BASF for more than two years and did not shy away from the challenge, declaring itself ready and willing to design, develop and build a robust, safe 45ft tank container, that could help BASF re-engineer the on-site logistics at Ludwigshafen.

So, in 2015, the first prototype of this extra-large tank was delivered to the chemicals firm.

In 2017, this story became a reality: BASF signed a contract with Van Hool for the construction of 482 45ft and 52ft ISO tanks with volumes of 53-63,000 and 73,000 litres, respectively.

By the end of 2023, Van Hool had built 982 of these units, which are all in use at BASF. They are stacked up to six high and are equipped with state-of-the-art fittings.

At Ludwigshafen, the containers are shuttled around the site on AGVs (automated guided vehicles) while also being suitable for rail transport as well as internal storage purposes. Because they are detachable from the rail wagon, the tank containers need significantly less infrastructure than conventional rail tank-wagons, making them more flexible for loading, unloading and cleaning.

Thus, nearly 10 years on what seemed a daunting challenge to come up with a genuine innovation in tank container manufacturing and deployment is going from success to success.

www.vanhool.com

By the end of 2023, Van Hool had built 982 of the 45ft tanks used by BASF

MIMU – equipping the energy transition

Since 2019, MIMU Tank leasing has been offering ISO tanks on lease for chemical liquids and some two years ago, MIMU expanded its specialty fleet by offering container equipment to meet the growing demand for sustainable fuels and chemicals.

Central to this was the introduction of Multi Element Gas Containers(MEGCs) to carry hydrogen. The element is seen as critical to the achieving the energy transition.

Bulk Distributor caught up with MIMU's Michael Govers to talk about progress since then

'There is a growing demand for type IV MEGCs with regards to the transport and storage of hydrogen'

BD. It has been a few years since the launch of the MEGCs. How has demand for these units been performing since then?
MG. During the past one-and-a-half years, where we have been involved with type IV MEGCs, it has become clear that there is a growing demand for this type of container with regards to the transport and storage of hydrogen.

Types I, II and III have been part of the gas industry for some time now, although we decided to focus on the type IV composite units. They have been used to store or transport CNG or biogas, and with the globally renewed interest in hydrogen, we strongly believe in a significant growth in demand over the next few years for the market regarding the type IV MEGC units.

In fact, we started a new 'renewables department' at the beginning of this year where we focus on offering transport and storage lease solutions for green chemicals, such as green hydrogen, e-ammonia, e-methane and e-methanol.

Was the decision to supply these on MIMU's own initiative, or did it spring from customer requests?
It was in fact requested by a customer who was looking to expand into the hydrogen business. After our research, we saw an opportunity to offer these type IV units on a lease basis as this option was not yet available.

Due to the larger capex (capital expenditure) of these units, we can lighten the capex of our customers and effectively increase their opex (operational expenditure) capabilities.

We take great pride and satisfaction in contributing to the global effort to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels by offering these units on a lease basis to our customers, therefore assisting them in their mission to advance towards sustainable energy solutions.

In which sectors are these units mostly being deployed?
Our current experience tells us that they will be used in different sectors due to the multiple application options of the units. The most common will be the transport and storage of hydrogen by producers and distributors.

We also have several units that are being used as a swappable hydrogen fuel source for hydrogen refuelling stations, therefore making it a fast, easy and safe method to accommodate the filling stations. There are currently also a number of pilot projects in the maritime and aviation sector as well, which makes the Type IV MEGC a very interesting product with many possibilities.

Does this also go for the T50 tanks for ammonia carriage?
Using a T50 unit to transport ammonia is not new and has been done for several years. Moreover, because ammonia is a relatively stable and easy transport vector for hydrogen, we expect this market to grow even more significantly over the next couple of years.

The same goes for methanol and methane. Therefore, we have decided to focus on offering transport and storage lease solutions for these products with our newly created 'renewables department'.

Among your fleet of standard tanks what is the current state of the market?
Just like most businesses in our industry, we have had a challenging year for standard ISO tanks as there was a general feeling of doubt and instability due to global and geopolitical events.

That being said, it is picking up again and new inquiries are reaching us, although mostly with less time urgency. We do believe that this is temporary and that it will restore itself.

How has fleet utilisation held up during the past year? Has the downturn in the (mostly European) chemicals industry affected off-hire rates?

MIMU also has several units that are being used as a swappable hydrogen fuel source for hydrogen refuelling stations

Yes, we did have more off-hires this year like most leasing companies have experienced, but we also extended several of our leasing contracts with various of our customers. So, in general we are happy with the past year's results and we are eager to continue and improve in 2024.

Do you plan to add further units during the next year?
Yes indeed, we are currently in conversation with multiple, current and new, customers to assist them with offering our units on lease. This goes for ISO tanks as well as MEGCs, for both of which we aspire to achieve significant growth over the next year.

Regarding the type IV MEGCs for hydrogen we understand that this is an evolving market and we have to keep researching and adapting to the market's specific needs. We are excited to include this in our business strategy and look forward to expanding together with the industry.

https://mimu-tankleasing.com

Leasing fleet up nearly 16,000

The number of tanks in leasing company fleets stood at 376,195 on 1 January 2024, according to the 2024 ITCO Global Fleet Report, up from 360,925 a year earlier.

Average utilisation across the sector fell back to 83 percent from just under 90 percent at the same time 2023, indicative of a softer global market for tank container usage that saw the number of 'idle' lessor tanks almost double.

ITCO calculates at least 38 companies worldwide provide tank container leasing services. These range from large global lessors to regional and local companies.

As shown in Fig 1, at 1 January 2024, the top 10 lessors accounted for 317,740 tanks, representing about 85 percent of the total leasing fleet.

Eurotainer and Raffles Lease, which have the same owner, had a combined fleet of 85,000 tanks, with Eurotainer owning 50,000 units and Raffles 35,000.

EXSIF Worldwide runs a fleet of 71,150 tanks, while Seaco Global had 43,000 in its fleet.

www.international-tank-container.org

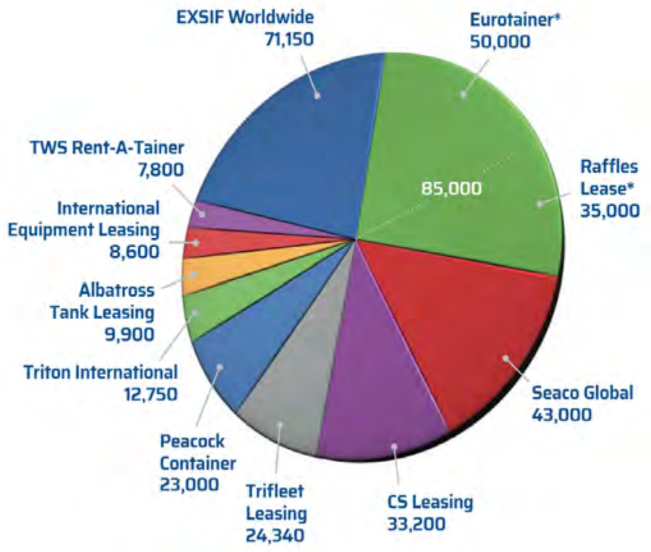


Fig 1. Top Ten Leasing Companies

Pol takes over at Trifleet

Trifleet Leasing has appointed Robin Pol as its new managing director.

"I am pleased to announce Robin's promotion," said Thomas A Ellman, executive vice president and chief financial officer of GATX, Trifleet's parent company.

"With his deep industry knowledge, passion for serving customers, and a proven leadership track record, Robin is well-suited to lead Trifleet and continue building on its reputation for providing high-quality tank containers and best-in-class service to customers."


The softer tank leasing market saw some customers postponing decisions on fleet expansion

Since joining Trifleet in 1995, Pol has held various leadership roles across the commercial and technical departments. In his most recent position as director of commercial, global accounts and strategy, he was responsible for all business development activities and for ensuring that Trifleet delivers outstanding value to its customers.

"I am honoured to lead our exceptional team at Trifleet," Pol said. "I look forward to working more closely across the organization to further Trifleet's business growth and mission to service our customers across the globe at the highest levels."

Trifleet recorded a segment profit of US$13.4 million on revenues of $41.5 million, according to GATX's 10-K filing to the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

The filing noted that profit decreased slightly due to higher maintenance and interest expenses, partially offset by higher lease revenue, resulting from more tank containers in the fleet, and higher repair revenue.

The tank container leasing market experienced softer demand across certain regions in 2023, it continued, with some customers postponing decisions on fleet additions. Utilisation was 87.3 percent at 31 December 2023.

1000 up

GATX Rail Europe recently celebrated the 1,000th 119 cbm multi-purpose champion gas railcar – formally known as Zags, GATX type 7598.

Two years ago, the leasing company reported that the versatile gas railcar was a favourite among customers. At that point it had more than 500 Zags in its fleet, leased to more than 20 customers. The 1,000th Zags, also the 5,000th gas railcar, left GATX's in-house workshop in Ostróda (WSO -Wagon Service Ostróda), for client Dow Europe GmbH, in Germany.

Elisabeth Jilli, head of sales & service, said: "With our 1,000th multi-purpose champion gas railcar, we have doubled our 119cbm railcar fleet in a little over two years and are ready to meet the demand for it."

The GATX Zags is fully optimised and a multi-purpose gas wagon. The railcar has a low tare weight, crash buffers and a strong tank head as part of its safety features. It is simple and safe to load and unload and its reduced tare weight allows a payload increase.

As with all GATX railcars, the Zags are fully equipped with standard telematics solution that customers can upgrade to include extra sensors and data.

www.gatx.eu

GATX Rail Europe celebrated the rollout of the 1,000th Zags 119 gas railcar

Reichmuth takes stake in Meeberg

At the start of 2024, Swiss Infrastructure fund Reichmuth & Co acquired a stake in Netherlands-based Meeberg Group, with a cross-border Baker Tilly team advising the buyer throughout the process.

Reichmuth bought the stake in what is the inaugural deal of its newly launched Clean Mobility Fund. Financial terms were not been disclosed.

"This investment offers the exact infrastructure characteristics we are looking for: value in tangible assets, highly visible, contracted and inflation-protected cashflows, a strong management team with a clear and shared vision for the company," said Roland Kaufmann from Reichmuth.

Established in 1988, Meeberg is based in the Dutch city of Breda and focuses on the leasing and sale of ISO tanks. According to Kaufmann, the ISO tank sector represents a major growth market, adding that Meeberg is well positioned to capitalise on the opportunities and expand its footprint.

Although a niche sector in the container market, Reichmuth noted that the global tank fleet more than doubled between 2012 and 2022. Looking ahead, the investment firm said continued strong demand for the transport of hazardous chemicals and liquified gases is expected to drive further growth in the market.

"We are confident that the collaboration with Reichmuth will help us unlock synergies that will not only bolster our operational capabilities, but also bring about exciting opportunities to accelerate our expansion," said Eelco van de Meeberg, CEO of Meeberg Group.

On the buy-side of the transaction, Baker Tilly provided due diligence support in a cross-border team led by Jan Kreijkes and Lorenz Roth. The consulting firm provided the full scope of due diligence services spanning financial, tax, legal, human resources, and technology.

Commenting on the support, Kaufmann said: "We very much valued the professional set-up of the entire collaboration, with a clear focus on the alignment of due diligence targets in the beginning of the process and an ongoing focus on the specific client needs throughout the process with regular updates on the process itself as well as the findings, ultimately leading to the best outcome in the transaction structure.


Reichmuth reckons the tank sector represents a major growth market, and Meeberg is well positioned to capitalise on the opportunities

Hizam appointed Peacock agent

Peacock Container has appointed Hizam Shipping as its official agent in Saudi Arabia.

The leasing company said the collaboration underscores Peacock's commitment to a fast growing market for ISO tank solutions in the Middle East.

Headquartered in Dammam, Hizam Shipping Agencies covers all major gateways to Saudi Arabia, including Riyadh, Jeddah, and Yanbu. With years of expertise and a comprehensive range of service offerings, such as ship/port/NVOCC agency, operating container and dry bulk terminals, freight forwarding, and transport services with 180 flatbed trailers and 75 dump trucks, Hizam provides one-stop services to both local and overseas customers.

ESG recognition

Late last year, Peacock was recognised for its commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) in the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark Infrastructure Assessment 2023 (GRESB).

Peacock showed huge improvement, scoring 91 out of 100 points overall compared with 70 in 2022. This compared with an average score of 81 for its peer group. It also achieved a perfect segment score on its ESG performance and secured a four-star rating.

Peacock sees its tank containers as an important component in a reduced carbon environment due to their suitability for intermodal use

The company's tank containers are an important component in a reduced carbon environment due to their suitability for intermodal use. They are recognised as one of the safest and highly durable means of moving liquid and gas products. Peacock strives to be a socially responsible company and integrate sustainability in its strategy and operations.

"We are extremely proud of our results in the GRESB assessment, particularly our significant year-on-year improvement," said Group CEO Jesse Vermeijden. "We are always looking at how we operate and considering ways in which we can meaningfully contribute to a more sustainable future. These results demonstrate the progress we are making in achieving our goals.

Vermeijden continued: "We also have supportive shareholders, who put ESG at the centre of everything we do, and constantly support our efforts to improve."

Earlier in 2023, Peacock also achieved an EcoVadis gold rating for its progress in managing environmental, labour and human rights, and governance factors.

"We appreciate this recognition by independent agencies of our commitment to embed sustainability and ESG principles at Peacock. We are already looking at and working on areas for improvement in our ESG performance," Vermeijden said.

Peacock's parent company, infrastructure fund manager Arcus, has participated in the GRESB infrastructure assessments since 2017. In addition to taking part in the assessments, Arcus also requires all of its portfolio companies to complete the scrutiny.

Arcus uses the GRESB benchmarking process as a tool to assess ESG performance at the investee company level, facilitate engagement for internal and external discussions, and to set performance targets. The aim is to improve asset ESG performance.

Each year, Arcus' ESG Committee works closely with the asset and management teams at investee companies to prepare a gap analysis based on the GRESB assessment. They then work in partnership to implement specific ESG improvements, usually relating to policies, processes, management oversight, or KPI reporting.

https://peacockcontainer.com

Eurotainer enters oilfield market

Eurotainer has introduced a specialist tank container and chassis for the oil field services sector.

The unit has been created as a comprehensive solution designed to meet the operational and safety requirements of oil fields. It offers a variety of features and components tailored specifically for the industry.

With a capacity of 6,340 gallons, the unit is equipped for efficient product delivery and storage. It was built to withstand the harsh conditions of the oil field environment.

It has been built to comply with US OSHA on-site safety regulations while in service on oilfields. The container was designed with downpiped and ground level control of the product loading line and similarly, the air/vent line is also equipped with downpiped and ground level control, ensuring the safe and controlled release of air and pressure.

A collapsible handrail on top of the container is included, providing fall protection for workers. In addition, an extended ladder has been fitted to ensure safe access to the top platform.

The tank container & chassis is also fitted with a Class I/Div 2/ Explosion Proof rated advanced technology telemetry system for remote monitoring and alerting.

www.eurotainer.com

A collapsible handrail on top of the container provides fall protection for workers

The perception is that depot capacity has failed to keep pace with the growth in tank container usage

ITCO to hold depot meeting

More than 110 participants have already registered for the ITCO Tank Container Depot Meeting taking place at the Hilton Hotel, Rotterdam, on Friday 19 April.

The meeting will focus on a range of issues relating to tank container depot activity, including: operations, safety, efficiency, communication and the environment.

The meeting will commence with a welcome networking reception on Thursday18 April, commencing at 18:00. This will take place at the Hilton Hotel.

Conference Sessions on Friday 19 April will start at 09:00 and the Meeting will conclude at 15:30.

The meeting represents an early outing for new ITCO president Paul Gooch. He told Bulk Distributor that it was "an honour and privilege" to be introduced to the 2023 ITCO Annual Members Meeting in Amsterdam last November as president-elect, taking over from long-standing president Reg Lee.

"It was an outstanding event, with around 250 registered attendees, a record for an ITCO Annual Meeting," he said. "The strong attendance reinforced the impression that ITCO is a vibrant trade association, with an engaged membership, ready to embrace new initiatives in support of the industry.

"One of the most impressive presentations during the meeting was by Mark Warner of Den Hartogh, who shared his experiences with SHEQ standards from some depot operations around the world," Gooch continued. "At the end of his presentation, he urged ITCO members to sign-up for a Work Group to explore the possibility of developing an ITCO Global Depot Audit and Assessment scheme. There was an excellent response, and ITCO is now in the process of setting up the Work Group, sponsored by Mark Warner, and under the leadership of William Leigh-Pemberton of Bertschi.

"In the past 10 years the global tank container fleet has grown at a CAGR of 8.2 percent. Although we lack precise data, the perception is that depots providing maintenance, repair, cleaning, and inspection services have failed to keep pace with this growth, and this lack of capacity could potentially constrain future growth of the industry. We also recognise that it is not just a question of capacity, but ITCO needs to take the lead in developing global depot standards for safety, health, and environmental performance," he commented.

At the depot meeting, Session 1 will focus on: 'Realities and Challenges of the Tank Container Depot Industry'. Martin Levitt, technical director, Den Hartogh Global Logistics, will present the tank container operator perspective on depots. He will be followed by Scott Harrison, CEO pf DCI – Depot Connect International, who will underline that safety is the industry's top priority. He will discuss the importance of introducing an industry-wide safety culture.

The final presentation of Session 1 will give an update on the development of a global ITCO Tank Container Depot Audit Scheme. ITCO president Paul Gooch will inform participants of the progress of Depot Audit Work Group and next steps.

Session 2 will cover the development of industry standards and efficient communications. William Leigh-Pemberton, strategic development director, Bertschi, will give an update on the development of digital standards. He will be followed by Douglas Owen, secretary-general, Bureau International des Containers, who will inform participants of the work that BIC is doing to develop depot coding, geofencing and the BoxTech Global Container Database.

After lunch, Session 3 will focus on Safety and Environmental issues. Wouter Brouwer, business development director, THINK360, will present how video and virtual reality technology can be used to enhance safety. This will be followed by a case study on the implementation of safe working practices (working in confined spaces, working on top of tanks, PPE), given by Sarfaraz Selani, technical manager, Sahreej, Saudi Arabia.

The conference will conclude with environmental best practice issues – with presentations on sustainable tank recycling, together with updates on the ITCO project for the correct disposal of seals and gaskets; and developments on the PFAS regulatory process.

ITCO Members can register for the conference for €295. Non-Members, €595.

www.itco.org

Dinges Logistics has opened its newest site

Located in Grünstadt, in the Rhineland-Pfalz region of Germany, the expansion marks a significant step in the company's growth.

The new site was carefully chosen. It is strategically located and provides an additional 5,000 sqm of logistics space, which serves as valuable parking space for the vehicle fleet. The warehouse space of 1,300 sqm offers the opportunity for future-oriented use in line with customer requirements.

"We are already in constructive discussions with our customers in order to integrate the latest facilities into our existing service portfolio in the best possible way," explained Michael Klopp, chief operating officer.

"Our aim is to offer a comprehensive value-added service and we believe the new site will strengthen our position in this respect. In addition, the proximity to the other sites in Grünstadt will create synergies and enable us to make our internal processes and services even more efficient."

The expansion underlines Dinges Logistics' continuous efforts to grow as a company, Klopp added. In this context, the management considers it crucial to react flexibly to changing market requirements and at the same time to improve services continuously.

"The new site in Grünstadt is an important step in our development and we look forward to continuing our success story. An in-depth understanding of our customers' needs is fundamental to this," commented Ingo Dinges, owner and managing director.

https://dinges-logistics.com

The Grünstadt expansion underlines Dinges' efforts to grow as a company

Washing AND drying

It will come as no surprise that a tank is wet after cleaning with water and/or steam.

Often that is not a problem. In fact, sometimes it is even desirable that a tank remains moist. However, there are also products that do not tolerate water well, so the tank must be dried after cleaning.

Gröninger's Drypack, which has been available for years, is a modular system that consists of filters, a heating element, and a fan. The system traditionally used steam or hot water to heat the air, but an alternative was developed last year that heats the air using electrical power.

The hot air is blown into the tanks through stainless steel pipes, ensuring that they leave the cleaning bay completely dry and ready for the next loading location, all in just a few minutes after cleaning.

https://groninger.eu

IFC Inflow ensures safe access

IFC Inflow recently completed an access rack job for IG Doors, a Wales-based door manufacturer supplying a range of markets.

Every few months or so the company would have tank containers or tankers on site, delivering paint and chemicals to coat their doors. The loading/unloading process involved manoeuvring the hose to the top of the tankers in order to access the product. IG was using the inbuilt tank ladder and handrails to access the tops of the containers, with workers carrying the heavy hose up and down with them. IG Doors identified this as a risk to worker safety and approached IFC Inflow for a solution.

IFC's advice to top loading sites needing to access the tank tops is always that, when possible, a fixed solution, such as a purpose-built gantry, is the safest and most efficient option.

However, this site was primarily for manufacturing doors and was only receiving tanks on site once in a while. Having assessed the site and IG's operational needs, IFC concluded the best solution would be an all-in-one mobile access solution that could be stored away and moved in place as and when needed.

So, IFC recommended its TopTank mobile loading ladder consisting of a heavy-duty aluminium ladder fitted with a height-adjustable three-rail fall prevention safety cage and mounted to an easy to manoeuvre mobile steel support frame.

The stairs are easy to use for a single operator without the need for vehicles or other towing equipment, making them ideal for small operations.

IG Doors opted for the largest size cage to ensure maximum manoeuvrability for workers when completing at height operations. The company was very happy with the result as it is now safeguarding its workforce against falls and minimising the risk of accidents occurring on site.

Having assessed the IG Doors site, IFC concluded the best solution would be an all-in-one mobile access platform

For another IFC customer, an existing platform for tanker loading was upgraded to include a fall prevention system

Prior to this, IFC Inflow was called to the site of an Irish chemical manufacturer and distributor in Shannon, Republic of Ireland.

The customer was installing a new chemical tanker loading bay and wanted IFC's help to make sure it was as safe as possible for workers accessing the tanker tops to carry out loading operations.

There was an existing platform spanning the width of the tanker roadway that would act as the access point for tanker loading. This would involve implementing a suitable fall prevention system including access, safety cages and liquid loading arms.

There were two key challenges that IFC had to overcome on this project. The first one was the location of the gantry. Where generally workers using one of the access systems would access tankers from the side, adjacent to the direction of the tanker, the orientation of this platform meant the FlowStep folding stairs would lower down parallel to the tanker beneath it. IFC adapted the design to allow for this, creating tailor-made safety cages that would fit longways on the tanker.

There was also the challenge of the gantry being significantly taller than the tankers visiting the site. The platform was 5m tall, where the tankers would only be approximately 3.6m. IFC's solution was to provide a five-step folding stair unit which would offer maximum amount of reach from the access system.

However, even the five-step folding stair unit left a slight gap between the last stair and the top of the tanker. To resolve this, IFC designed custom-made ladder type rungs that attached to the bottom of the folding stair units and extended the reach so that it met the tanker, making it as safe as possible for workers.

The loading arms needed to be able to handle corrosive chemicals. They also had to be specially designed and made to adapt to the significant distance between the platform and the tanker so that they could reach the tankers manway connection. They were fitted with special vapour cones, vapour return hoses, overfill prevention sensors and were spring balanced for ease of use. They were made of stainless steel to cope with the corrosive chemicals.

In the case of this project, the customer opted to install the equipment itself, so following IFC's design, consultation, and delivery, the customers was able to install the system and begin using the new tanker loading bay. The customer has now increased its loading capabilities and have the assurance that workers are safe while carrying out loading operations.

https://ifcinflow.co

Rinchem's new AZ warehouse

Rinchem has opened its newest custom-built hazmat warehouse in Surprise, Arizona, USA.

The facility covers 123,516 sq ft with 16,000 pallet positions, and allows Rinchem to support the booming semiconductor industry in the Phoenix Metro Area.

"This new facility represents a significant investment in our Arizona operations and is our second chemical warehouse in the Phoenix metro area," stated Chris Easter, CEO of Rinchem. "We're confident it will play a crucial role in supporting the growth of the local semiconductor industry and contributing to the region's economic prosperity."

The warehouse features several key elements, including a 103,000 sq ft ISO container yard boasting 432 spaces. There is also a dedicated gas pad with 48 storage bays for the safe storage and segregation of high purity chemicals and gases.

Temperature controlled storage allows Rinchem to caters for various hazard classes and chemistries with dedicated storage spaces ranging from refrigerated and freezer rooms to temperature-controlled zones for flammable and corrosive materials.

Future plans include cleanroom services to meet the stringent requirements of the semiconductor industry.

The Surprise warehouse opening follows Rinchem's launch of two other hazmat facilities in 2023 located in Cornelius, Oregon, and Penang, Malaysia.

www.rinchem.com

Proliferating plastic pellets

Often referred to as nurdles, tiny pellets form the building blocks used in the production of most plastic products, and their use is universal and transported around the world.

As a provider of liability insurance to the international freight industry, TT Club says it is much concerned about the dangers to the environment of nurdle spillage. TT's Josh Finch explains that all those involved in the supply chain of plastic materials must be more aware of these dangers, and take steps to ensure their safe carriage

The release of nurdles into the environment has severe ecological implications

Focus on maritime transport of microplastic pellets has turned towards the dangers of spillage following well-publicised incidents, including that affecting Sri Lankan beaches in 2021*, and more recently, late last year in Northern Spain. Nurdles are typically just a few millimetres in diameter – about the size of a lentil. Their release into the sea, other waterways or the environment in general have severe ecological implications, since the pellets may be eaten by fish or other sea creatures, as well as by birds and small mammals.**

By accumulating in the stomach of the creature consuming it, the plastic has an impact on nourishment. Additionally, due to their unique chemical composition these pellets may also absorb toxins from the environment, presenting additional risks to the food chain. Furthermore, reports have surfaced recently of insects and microbes that have evolved to consume plastic, but may naturally be consumed by birds and small mammals.

Once a spill has taken place, nurdles can rapidly be dispersed in water due to their small size, resulting in complex and costly clean-up efforts. The maritime industry is rightly focused on ways to make such events less likely, although there are uncertainties over how this can best be done. However, focusing only on these maritime incidents understates the scope of the risk involved in the end-to-end supply chain of microplastics. There are also significant and diverse landside risks involved in the packaging, handling and packing of this type of cargo. Additionally, many of the same environmental risks that occur in the oceans are also present on land.

Common packaging solutions

There are several different packaging methods used to ship nurdles, eg, tank containers, dry bulk containers, cardboard boxes with plastic lining, polypropylene sacks (25-1,000kg), large cloth bags, and, intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) and drums.

Each of these has its own unique characteristics and benefits, presenting opportunities for the varied stakeholders involved.

Supply chain risks

Apart from the risks to the marine environment, other risks exist through the transport and storage supply chain.

Stability. Certain packaging, in particular large bags stored on pallets, can become unstable and have a tendency to shift during transit. Additionally, bags often split due to the shifting weight of the pellets inside them and there is currently no standard to which bags must be maintained. Unstable cargo, shifting weight and collapsing packages present challenges at all stages of the supply chain.

Weight distribution. When weight is unevenly distributed, there are increased risks of vehicle overturns. However, such dangers also extend to the warehouse operations through which the cargo passes, as bags may shift during packing or unpacking, endangering workers. Where cargo has shifted, simply opening the doors of a container, with weight pressed against them, may be highly dangerous.

Environmental risk. At whatever point of transit, including handling and transport over land, the occurrence of a spill necessitates adequate containment and clean-up. By some estimates, as many as one in 10 containerised consignments experiences a spill. Additionally, packing of bulk road and rail tank containers, often undertaken outside, often incurs incidental spillages.

Risk mitigation

While acknowledging that supply chain operators may have limited control over the types of packaging used, the use of cardboard boxes, large supersacks and ton bags should be discouraged.

By some estimates, as many as one in 10 containerised consignments experiences a spill

Spillages and instances of collapsing cargo using these types of packaging are alarmingly common, putting the workforce at risk, regardless of environmental hazards.

If packed and secured correctly, smaller 25kg sacks are less likely to shift and the quantity of nurdles to clean up when a sack is damaged or otherwise splits is far less than with larger bags. It would also be helpful if a minimum standard of quality was established to limit the use and subsequent impact of poor-quality sacks.

Containment

Supply chain workers should be made aware of the risks. Where spillages have happened in a container or in the yard, every attempt should be made to prevent plastic pollution from entering the environment. Nurdles should never be allowed to enter the water supply, either intentionally or as natural runoff. Where there is a danger of this happening, spillage equipment such as socks and filters that fit over drains should be used to prevent it.

Where tank containers are filled and emptied, operators should consider the use of pellet catching pans and mobile barriers to limit the chance of spillages entering the local environment, most especially the water supply.

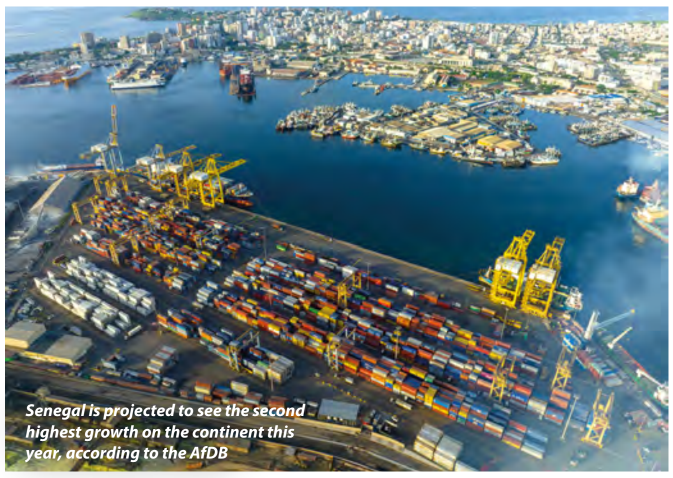
Summary

There are no easy solutions to the challenges presented by the transport and storage of plastic pellets: tank containers are costly; bags split and shift. The world is still grappling with the challenge of transporting nurdles safely to prevent serious ecological consequences.

However, it is worth noting that the challenge is larger than is commonly understood and impacts on the safety and efficacy of every stage of the supply chain. The environmental repercussions are not limited to events at sea. As the industry considers how to address the challenge, particularly at the IMO, a proactive approach to risk mitigation is advisable.

*** https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57395693**
**** https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/09/northern-spain-plastic-pellets-cargo-spill-beaches**

Focus turns to fast-growing African economy


Senegal is projected to see the second highest growth on the continent this year, according to the AfDB

Africa has long promised to be the next big logistics market. However, as Colin Ley writes, many challenges remain

Africa will account for eleven of the world's 20 fastest-growing economies this year with the continent's overall gross domestic product (GDP) set to advance by 3.8 percent in 2024 and by 4.2 percent in 2025.

These projections, issued by the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), list Niger as the strongest growth prospect with a forecast GDP increase of 11.2 percent this year, followed by Senegal (8.2 percent) and Libya (7.9 percent). In addition, a further 13 African countries are set to expand by more than 5 percent during 2024, sufficiently buoyant to prompt AfDB Group president Dr Akinwumi Adesina, to issue a call for "larger pools of financing" to be created and for several "policy interventions" to be made to boost Africa's growth further.

While remaining "cautiously optimistic" over these figures, due to the many challenges still posed to the continent by global and regional risks, the bank's chief economist Prof Kevin Urama, said Africa's top-performing economies are clearly benefitting from a number of encouraging factors. These include evidence of increasing levels of investment in key growth sectors, rising public and private consumption, and positive developments in leading export markets.

South Africa's importance

Although not one of the listed top GDP 'advancers', the importance of South Africa (SA) to the continent's economic growth was a central feature of the country's State of the Nation Address in early February, when SA President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged, among many other issues, to deal with the "severe inefficiencies" of the country's freight logistics system.

"We are taking action to improve our ports and rail network and restore them to world-class standards," he said, adding that a clear roadmap was in place to stabilise the performance of Transnet, the government-owned railways, ports, and pipelines operator, and to reform the logistics system.

"Working closely with business and labour interests, we have established dedicated teams to turn around five strategic corridors that transport goods for export purposes."

In this context, the President said the number of ships waiting to berth at Port of Durban has been significantly reduced over the past three months. While more than 60 ships were queuing at the port in mid-November 2023, for example, just 12 ships were still waiting in line to onload at the end of January this year.

On the Transnet issue, he announced the appointment of an international terminal operator to help expand and improve the system's largest terminal at Port of Durban. An overhauling of the national freight rail system was also unveiled, with the promise that this will include allowing private rail operators to access the rail network.

President Ramaphosa, building further on his logistics vision, went on to draw a potential positive from the current conflict-based disruption that is affecting shipping traffic through the Suez Canal, stating that South Africa is "well positioned" to offer bunkering services for ships as they are increasingly being rerouted via the country's shores.

In similar vein, the SA Department of Transport's ongoing strategic plan, which is set to run to the end of the 2024/25 fiscal year in its present form, features a "steadfast commitment" to position the country's ocean economy as a strategic contributor to its economic stimulation. The plan states that while SA is a maritime trading nation, the country has yet to "achieve its desired status as a ship owning or ship operating nation", a vision for development which is seen by many as opening a new world of potential for the country's trading and logistics investors.

Suez disruption

While South Africa may be looking at expanded bunkering opportunities, generated by an increased flow of ships around its coastline, the opposite could turn out to be true for other African nations. Current estimates indicate there has been a 67 percent decrease in container ship transits through the Suez Canal due to the conflict in the Red Sea, a decline in traffic which is likely to be impacting a number of African countries quite severely.

According to a report from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), foreign trade for several East African countries is 'highly dependent' on the Suez Canal. Most exposed is Sudan which has approximately 34 percent of its foreign trade, by volume, channelled through the Canal, followed by Djibouti on 31 percent, Kenya (15 percent) and Tanzania (10 percent).

UNCTAD also identified potential "far-reaching economic implications" linked to the prospect of a prolonged period of disruption to container shipping through the Canal. This will "threaten global supply chains" and potentially delay deliveries, the trade body stated, leading in turn to higher costs and rising inflation.

Cross-border differences

For companies doing business in Africa, of course, the differences which exist between the continent's many countries is one of the more major areas of challenge for trade operators.

"Each country has its own rules and challenges," says Bart van de Vorst, managing director of Van den Bosch (VDB), the Netherlands-headquartered logistics company with a history of business involvement in Africa.

"Doing business in South Africa is very different from doing business in Nigeria, for example. In some countries, in fact, tank transport for the food industry is still uncharted territory, making co-operation with local parties necessary to successfully establish a business activity.

"In addition, in Europe or America, for just about any business activity, you can find a relevant organisation on Google that can take care of what you need. Unlike in some countries in Africa, where most companies cannot even be found on Google. You actually have to go there and establish a local presence.

"Developments around technology also vary enormously in Africa, ranging from food processing plants with top notch refineries and the latest investments to plants that have been running for 30 or 40 years without any innovation," van de Vorst adds. "Investment in technology is being reflected across Africa, however, with commitments not only being made by multinationals but also some local players.

"There is one item that is naturally available in Europe, but is a problem in Africa, namely energy. This is especially a challenge in South Africa where they have load shedding."

VDB's own logistics efficiency in Africa took a major step forward in November 2023, of course, with the company's opening of its new cleaning facilities in Abidjan, the largest city in Ivory Coast.

"Being able to clean in Ivory Coast means that clean, empty tanks are always available," van de Vorst tells *Bulk Distributor*. "In concrete terms, this means that we can now send our ISO tanks to Africa full, a development with makes the supply chain more sustainable, saves costs for us and our customers and allows us to operate much more flexibly than in the past."

AfDB funding

Another recent advance, albeit still at the development stage, featured the unveiling of a US$40 million loan to the Mozambique rail and port authority, Portos e Caminhos de Ferro de Moçambique EP (CFM) by the African Development Bank, which has also pledged to help 'mobilise' a further $30 million from 'other lenders'.

The objective of the CFM project is to facilitate the purchase of 10 new diesel-electric locomotives, 300 transport wagons, and 120 tank containers, acquisitions that are designed to help the rail and port authority massively upgrade the efficiency of its main trade corridor, the Ressano Garcia railway line.

AfDB say this will strengthen intra-African trade and regional integration by increasing the capacity and volume of goods transported from neighbouring countries, thereby not only benefitting Mozambique but also South Africa, Eswatini, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

Boosting cross-border trade and the logistics to go with it, also featured in recent comments by both the African Union Commission's ambassador Albert Muchanga, and the president of the African Cargo & Logistics Alliance (ACLA) Ukata Christian.

"The future of Africa rests on economic integration," said ambassador Muchanga, commissioner for economic development, trade, tourism, industry and minerals, speaking in relation to the AfDB's 2024 growth forecasts.

"Our small economies are not competitive in the global market," he said, adding that a healthy internal African trade market was needed to ensure value-added development, founded on the intra-African production of manufactured goods.

Ukata Christian, speaking to *Bulk Distributor*, agrees, stating that ACLA's membership is looking for a general upgrading of Africa's transport infrastructure with a major focus on improving connections across the continent.

Working regularly with air and sea freight member companies across all 53 African countries, the Nigeria-based ACLA president highlighted language differences, communication, and the lack of long-term policies, as being among the industry's main barriers to securing integrated progress. Despite this, however, he emphasised ACLA's determination to increase working activities across borders in pursuit of the all-Africa development of trade and logistics.

In addition, while being generally positive over the part played by the African Development Bank, and other national banks, in advancing the continent's transport networks and facilities, he was critical of the current slow pace of progress.

"I'm sure we'll see the desired improvements being made in the future," he said, "but for the moment the pace of change isn't happening fast enough."

Finishing with AfDB's encouraging 2024 growth projections, however, the bank points out that no fewer than 41 of the continent's countries will achieve a GDP of over 3.8 percent this year with 13 nations securing a growth rate in excess of 1 percent above their 2023 performance. An improving base certainly on which to build the continent's trading future.

Van den Bosch - 'You actually have to go there and establish a local presence'

Delivering growth - the importance of a fully engaged workforce

Having an engaged driver workforce is fundamental to enabling growth and successful partnerships within the bulk fuels industry, writes David Heath, head of fuels at Suttons Tankers

Employee engagement is crucial, especially in transport. Drivers are the beating heart of a logistics business. They represent everything the company stands for and are brand ambassadors to its customers.

Remote working and limited face to face interaction with senior management can lead to feelings of disconnection, impacting motivation and performance. Effective engagement boosts productivity, loyalty, and overall satisfaction, ultimately improving service quality and business success.

Due to the increasing numbers of depots and out-bases that logistics businesses now operate to be geographically advantageous, many drivers work remotely and do not frequently interact with senior management.

The absence of interaction can have a detrimental impact on drivers. It can often lead to a lack of direction, support, and mentorship. Drivers who work remotely can also be subject to a lack of understanding of the business strategy, resulting in low motivation.

Through research carried out by the Suttons Tankers leadership team, it has been recognised that drivers are keen to understand the overarching strategy and feel fulfilled knowing that their role and efforts are contributing to the development of the business.

Remotely, not remote

At Suttons Tankers we have acknowledged the importance of keeping our driver workforce engaged and the fuels team have seen real progress. Pooling the strength of the regional operations support structure to the local operations management team has been a key factor in our success.

Suttons has invested in its operational management team to ensure that an operations manager is present at our major remote working sites every day to interact with drivers. For our smaller sites there is a schedule for regular visits. Safety briefings are delivered, guidance is given, and key messages are shared. Having a management presence provides structure to the division and a framework for support.

Joel Hildago, one of our fuels drivers, commented: "It's reassuring to have a manager available at the start or end of each shift. Having regular training and briefings keeps us all aware of the bigger picture, but it's also nice to have someone there to debrief the day with."

In a recent engagement survey, Suttons Tankers' fuels drivers scored highly, with more than three quarters of our drivers seeing themselves still employed here in two years' time. It's also worth noting that nine in 10 drivers 'understand what they need to do to succeed in their role. This increased management presence has clearly given direction and motivation to the driver cohort.

Strengthening support

On reflection of this feedback, the fuels leadership team is increasing its presence further to support engagement with the drivers. Senior managers are carrying out a series of town hall meetings across all sites in Q1 2024 which are aimed at enhancing the cultivated team spirit and strengthening relationships.

The driver team at Northampton, one of our remote working locations, are positive about the current level of communication with the leadership team. They have commented that "having the senior managers and wider operations team meet us at Town Hall meetings show we are one team."

Fuel tanker drivers carry an enormous amount of responsibility when on the road. Drivers such as Steve Shrewsbury-Gee at Suttons understand, and are well trained in, the safe carriage of dangerous goods and the necessary precautions they must adhere to.

Many fuel tanker drivers deliver directly into forecourts. This involves direct interaction with the public. To act as safely as possible, Steve determines the size of each site and respectfully waits until he can safely move the tanker into position for delivery.

He explains: "it is important to cordon off the area to protect the public. The managers at Suttons provide us with the equipment to put the customer and the public first when delivering the product. Knowing I have delivered the product safely at the end of each day is the most important thing to me."

The engagement survey also revealed that 98 percent of fuels drivers at Suttons 'know what they are expected to deliver' in their role. Clear job expectations and regular management check- ins are a contributing factor to this high level of engagement.

The management and training teams at Suttons empower drivers to follow the correct procedures and processes. Regular contact and refresher training is delivered to support them to carry out their job compliantly, delivering the highest levels of service to our customers.

While the results from the survey are encouraging, our efforts won't stop there. We are looking into rolling out tablet-based communications in our remote locations so that drivers can easily and regularly speak with the management team. Briefings, notices, and business information can be shared with drivers in an interactive way to further improve engagement in these more remote areas.

Thanks to the high levels of engagement in our fuels driver workforce, Suttons Tankers can provide the fantastic service, value, and safety our company is known for to a customer base located nationwide. Engagement is a core focus of ours and we are excited to explore other ways to keep our driver cohort engaged and committed, enabling us to grow further in the fuels sector.

www.suttonsgroup.com

Fuel tanker drivers carry an enormous amount of responsibility when on the road

Hoyer has ordered no less than 165 DAF XG 480 4x2 tractors

Hoyer renews tractor fleet

For road transport, Hamburg-based Hoyer relies on a fleet of more than 1,200 trucks and more than 1,700 semi-trailers, with a strong representation of the DAF brand.

Now, Hoyer is renewing its fleet with 165 DAF XG 480 4x2 tractors. The trucks, to be delivered in the coming months, will be used for operations across Europe. All vehicles feature DAF's suite of the latest advanced driving assistant systems (ADAS).

The new tractors will be stationed in Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland. Rudolf Schumacher, head of fleet management road for Europe Domestic of the Hoyer Group, explained the reasoning behind the fleet renewal DAF XG.

"These reliable trucks feature the latest, state-of-the-art safety systems and also provide a luxurious and comfortable experience for our drivers," he said. "The fact that these vehicles can run on HVO supports our ambition to contribute to a more sustainable future, as we want to take care of future generations. Driving on HVO reduces the carbon emissions up to 90 percent well to wheel. With this new series of DAF trucks, we will deliver exceptional service to our customers."

"DAF has been a preferred supplier of Hoyer for many years. We are honoured that this global leader in high quality transport solutions has chosen our DAF XG series to ensure timely deliveries for their customers," stated Bart Bosmans, director of marketing and sales and board member at DAF Trucks.

www.hoyer-group.com
www.daf.com

Mauser, Rikutec team up

Mauser Packaging and Rikutec Packaging have entered into an exclusive partnership in line with the production and promotion of sustainable IBCs on a global scale.

The alliance will add Rikutec's IBC solutions to the Mauser product portfolio with both parties launching a new reusable and robust, heavy duty, 1,000-litre IBC. Specifically designed for multi-trip usage and produced with recycled plastic materials, the new Mauser Poly IBC MT Series reduces the need for single-use packaging while meeting CO2 emission requirements.

The Poly IBC MT is available in different variations to meet the special requirements of many industries and can be equipped with digital IT devices for supply chain connectivity, providing real-time tracking and tracing, visibility, and risk mitigation.

With the integration of real IoT, customers can stay in touch with their container/product, having round-the-clock visibility to product fill levels, location, temperature, shock information, as well as technical documentation, manufacturing data, and loop information (number of fillings and returns).

"Both companies are focused on providing leading edge sustainable product solutions that offer reduction of CO2 emissions to customers, and Rikutec's product portfolio is a perfect addition to ours," said Michael Steubing, president International of Mauser.

"Together, Mauser and Rikutec are determined to make a real difference in the market," commented Bodo Richter, CEO & president of Rikutec Group. "Mauser's proven expertise and vast network will be instrumental in making the Poly IBC MT Series a familiar sight around the world, paving the way for a more sustainable future with state-of-the-art multi-trip packaging solutions."

www.mauserpackaging.com
www.rikutec.de

Rapid finalises acquisition of Lawgix

Rapid Packaging, Inc has acquired Lawgix International to strengthen its national supply chain strategy for their FIBC and industrial bag division.

The addition is claimed to expand the sustainability solutions offered through the multi-trip bulk bag programme, pioneered by former Lawgix international president/CEO Mike Lawrentz.

The company said customers in agriculture, food manufacturing, resin production, and more have been clamouring for a solution to the single-use bulk bags on the market today.

Developing a use-and-reuse loop in partnership with multinational customers has demonstrated the reliability and durability of a traceable, sustainable bag programme, Rapid said.

Rapid added that it is actively building out additional capacity to support growing sustainable solutions, both domestically and internationally.

Mike Sime, Rapid's co-CEO stated: "The impact of legislation introduced – like California's SB665 and SB64 – on the packaging industry, is increasing our investment to handle the demand. This is not a trend or a nice-to-have, this is happening."

https://rapidpackaging.com

AMP/AHS strengthens European sales teams

In a move to drive growth in the European market, Advanced Material Processing (AMP), which incorporates Kason Corporation and Marion Process Solutions, and Automated Handling Solutions (AHS), comprising Spiroflow and Cablevey Conveyors, have announced the addition of three new regional managers to their European sales teams.

The appointments underpin AMP and AHS's ongoing commitment to delivering innovative solutions to their customers.

Marc LeMeut brings experience as a pre-project engineer, sales manager for powder handling, and a project manager for liquid processes at a leading carton packaging company. As a regional sales manager, his main objective is to develop the sales pipeline for AMP and AHS equipment and processes in France and Benelux, leveraging his skills and experience to spearhead growth in the region.

Covering Spain, Italy, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta, Jan Pohl assumes the role of regional sales manager for South Europe. Pohl's background as a managing director for a German subsidiary in Spain and Portugal, coupled with his specialisation in the sales of high-tech solutions and automation, positions him in understanding the South European markets and consultancy sales processes.

Andrzej Maj is the new regional sales manager for Central-East Europe, covering regions from Estonia to Croatia. He has a background in management and marketing, combined with a passion for robotisation and automation.

Commenting on the appointments, Tom Finnegan, director of sales at AMP/AHS, said: "Bringing Marc, Jan and Andrzej on board is a testament to our focus on growth and our dedication to serving the EMEA market with innovative and tailored solutions. Their diverse experiences and unique perspectives are invaluable as we continue to expand our reach and deliver excellence. We are confident that their contributions will not only enhance our sales strategies but also strengthen our relationships with customers and partners across Europe."

www.amp-ahs.com.


The QA-CER certification qualifies LC Packaging as an approved rPP-PCR supplier

LC gets QA-CER recycling certification

LC Packaging has obtained the QA-CER certification for the use of recycled polypropylene (rPP) in FIBCs used for non-food applications.

This European-level certification not only affirms adherence to stringent quality standards, but also qualifies LC Packaging as an approved rPP-PCR supplier.

The global shift towards more sustainable packaging solutions, supported by legislative measures such as a Plastic Tax and Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, has resulted in a high demand for recycled content. Just as these local measures, EU Directives increasingly require proof of the claimed percentage and type of recycled content used.

However, the actual application of recycled content in packaging is difficult to determine from the product itself. To prove the use of recycled polypropylene in its products, LC Packaging has applied for the QA-CER certification. The audit process involved a meticulous examination of traceability and quality management procedures, a critical aspect in ensuring compliance.

The QA-CER audit has covered the full scope of LC Packaging's operations, including all offices, and encompassed a wide range of products with post-consumer and post-industrial recycled content. Dutch-Bangla Pack (LC Packaging's own production facility), and Sinobangla (one of the company's long-term production partners) have also been audited. Both facilities in Bangladesh have successfully completed the audit, showcasing LC's commitment to quality. The company also aims to have their other production partners obtain this certification in the near future.

A distinctive aspect of the QA-CER certification is its comprehensive coverage, extending beyond production facilities to encompass the entire chain of LC Packaging's offices. This end-to-end traceability and quality assurance not only enhances risk management for customers, but also demonstrates to governmental bodies that the claimed percentage of recycled material in LC's packaging is verified.

The QA-CER certification already brings significant advantages for customers in Belgium and Spain, the company said. It enables them to meet sustainability and recycling requirements while enjoying high-quality packaging solutions, and it plays a crucial role in their tax rebate eligibility.

Using this certification as a foundation, LC Packaging is now aiming to secure certifications for other plastic packaging products. By expanding the range of certified products, LC is setting a standard in sustainability and quality, reinforcing its commitment to achieving a circular economy.


The Royal designation is reserved for a select group of Dutch companies, associations, and institutions existing for at least 100 years

Royal recognition

LC Packaging has also received the predicate 'Royal' in honour of its 100th anniversary.

On 4 December 2023, the designation Royal was granted to the company by HM King Willem-Alexander, King of the Netherlands. This privilege is reserved for a select group of Dutch companies, associations, and institutions with a very good reputation, existing for at least 100 years.

Jeannette Baljeu, deputy commissioner for the province of Zuid-Holland to the King, handed over the official predicate to Art Lammers, former CEO and third generation at LC Packaging in front of all Dutch employees and his family.

The predicate Royal symbolises the respect, appreciation and trust of the Monarch towards LC Packaging. It is the oldest royal decoration in the Netherlands. Companies that have received the designation have the right to use 'Royal' in their name and to use the Royal crown in their logo.

Lucas Lammers, CEO of LC Packaging and 4th generation in the history of the family company, feels proud and honoured: "The predicate Royal reminds me once more how special it is to reach the age of 100 years as a company, and to do this in such a good condition. This shows that not only our financial capital is an important asset, but so much more our social and environmental capital. At the same time, it's a huge incentive to stick to our core values: to be committed, reliable and loyal."

www.lcpackaging.com

Greif Q1 sales down

Industrial packaging net sales at Greif fell by US$19.2 million to $686.6 million in the first quarter 2024.

The reason was put down primarily to lower volumes and lower average selling prices, partially offset by the full-quarter contribution from recent acquisitions.

Gross profit increased by $10 million to $135.3 million. The increase in gross profit was mostly due to lower raw material costs, partially offset by the same factors that impacted net sales and higher labour costs.

Operating profit increased by $5 million to $50.9 million primarily down to the same factors that impacted gross profit and lower integration costs, offset in part by higher SG&A expenses. Adjusted EBITDA decreased by $0.9 million to $70.9 million thanks to higher SG&A expenses and higher foreign currency translation losses, partially offset by the same factors that impacted gross profit.

www.greif.com

NPP buys Active Packaging

UK packaging firm NPP has bought Active Packaging Limited.

Active Packaging, based in Omagh, Northern Ireland, is a business with a 21-year history supplying a range of flexible packaging materials to the food, horticultural and industrial sectors throughout the island of Ireland.

The company is headed up by Chris Bloomfield and Gary Wallace and has a workforce of 13 people. Its portfolio of products includes printed and plain film on the roll, pouches, top & base webs, lidding films, bags, sacks, and industrial stretch hooding.

With this acquisition, NPP aims to leverage the strengths of both entities to deliver enhanced and diversified packaging solutions to its customers.

NPP said customers can expect an expanded range of packaging solutions, driven by a shared commitment to quality, sustainability, and customer satisfaction.

David Duffy, managing director of NPP, said: "Active Packaging is an ideal fit for NPP. Its broad product range and accumulated expertise provide the overall business with an unrivalled range of packaging materials. This acquisition also gives NPP a permanent base in Omagh which copper-fastens NPP's commitment to develop our packaging and systems business across the whole island of Ireland. We are impressed with Active Packaging's energy and relentless pursuit of excellent customer service and look forward to working with our new colleagues."

Gary Wallace and Chris Bloomfield, Active Packaging's directors, commented: "It was important to us that any company that wished to acquire our business, had the same enthusiasm and care for our customers and employees. It didn't take us long to realise that NPP is the perfect fit to take our business on to the next level. The Active team are excited for the future and with the extra resources NPP bring, we have no doubt great success will follow."

https://nppgroup.co.uk

Thielmann spins off Ucon

Thielmann Group has spun off its Ucon division to its management.

From now on Thielmann Ucon will act independently under the new name of Ucon Container System GmbH.

The product portfolio has been split as follows: Thielmann will continue to produce aseptic and industrial containers as well as pressure vessels; while Ucon Container System focuses on systems business and cubic containers.

www.thielmann.com

Abbey extends British Sugar partnership

Abbey Logistics Group (ALG) has seen its partnership with British Sugar extended.

This marks the third contract extension since 2016, solidifying a commitment that has spanned eight years to date.

Recognised by British Sugar as the lead logistics partner for bulk finished product deliveries, ALG has consistently achieved an 'Abbey Delivery on Time' performance (ie, within 30 minutes of the requested delivery time) in excess of 99 percent for the past two years.

As part of this extended partnership, ALG, which is now of Belgium-based Sitra Group, is introducing 23 new DAF tractor units into its fleet for British Sugar. Simultaneously, ALG is expanding its capabilities by adding alternative specification tankers as well as running extensive trials with alternative fuel vehicles and product discharge systems. This extended partnership and fleet expansion underscore Abbey Logistics Group's dedication to providing innovative, reliable, and sustainable logistics solutions, further solidifying its position as a key player in the industry.

Abbey is adding alternative specification tankers as well as running extensive trials with alternative fuel vehicles

Matthew Parsons, general manager for British Sugar, said: "British Sugar is a prestigious customer of Abbey's and a cornerstone in the company's success and history. The two companies have worked closely together for a very long time, and the relationship is going from strength to strength."

With an investment of £3.3 million, this fleet enhancement reaffirms ALG's ongoing commitment to its partnership with British Sugar and aligns with an agreed fleet replacement policy. The introduction of these new units, coupled with ongoing fleet investments in recent years, will significantly reduce the average fleet age to less than 2.5 years, ensuring optimal performance and reliability.

www.abbeylogisticsgroup.com

CSG's specialist acid tanker

Waste management company CSG has bought a 44 tonne, £200,000 tanker which has been lined with chemical-resistant fibreglass, allowing the business to transport all types of acid effectively.

CSG operates the UK's largest fleet of specialist waste management vehicles. All CSG drivers and chemists are trained extensively to remove and transport waste chemicals safely.

Waste acids are treated at CSG's Cadishead site, near Manchester, which was originally developed to treat antimony pentachloride mixed with chlorinated and fluorinated solvents, a catalyst arising from chemical production.

The 30,000 litre artic barrel was built and supplied by specialist tanker manufacturer RTN Clayton Vallely.

This latest investment by CSG follows hot on the heels of a near-£1 million expenditure on two high performance rigid vacuum tankers and a long-distance articulated liquid ring tanker, along with a KOKS CycloVac HVAM (Disab tanker).

"We are delighted to add this specialist fibreglass-lined tanker to our ever-expanding fleet," said Jen Cartmell, treatment director at CSG.

"We are able to process a wide range of complex industrial chemical substances, including acids and alkalis. This includes fuming acids such as oleum, chlorosulfonic acid and acidic solvents, as well as strong oxidising agents such as chromic acid, potassium permanganate and sodium hypochlorite.

"Some of these substances could cause severe corrosion to regular steel tankers so a fibreglass lining is required to ensure safe transportation as the material is highly-resistant to most acids and does not corrode.

"It is fantastic to be able to use the services of a British manufacturer to get this highly-specialist vehicle on the road for the benefit of our industrial customers right across the country.

Hazardous waste liquids are carefully neutralised and disposed of to the highest safety and environmental standards.

www.csg.co.uk

Linz, Rotterdam round trip

ÖBB Rail Cargo Group (RCG) is optimising its TransFER service with a connection to Rotterdam, which enables a direct round trip connection between Austria, Germany and the Netherlands.

The TransFER starts in Linz and runs via Duisburg, Germany, to Rotterdam. Everything follows a fixed timetable for reliable logistics planning. All types of stackable containers between 20ft and 45ft can be transported. The use of swap bodies is also possible in the direction of Rotterdam.

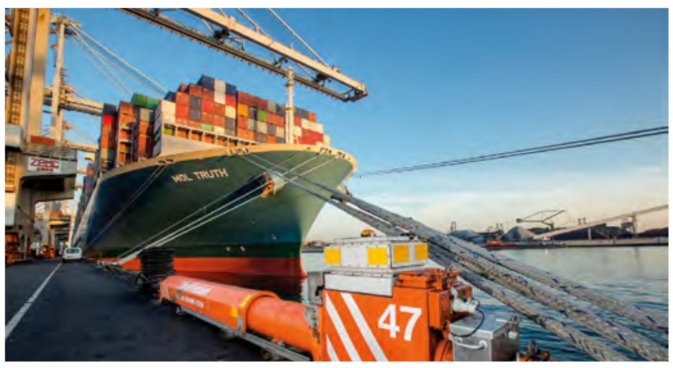
RCG is actively working on an additional transport option for craneable trailers. Dangerous goods (RID) can also be transported along the entire route.

"With our new TransFER Linz–Duisburg–Rotterdam, we are creating another high-frequency direct connection to one of the world's largest seaports," said RCG CEO Clemens Först.

"With four round trips per week and numerous transport options – from classic containers to swap bodies and soon also craneable trailers – our TransFER offers an optimal connection for maritime flows of goods to the economic regions of Western and Central Europe."

In addition, the TransFER allows transfers within Rotterdam to all maritime and continental terminals in the Maasvlakte and Waalhaven industrial and port areas, as well as to Antwerp and Zeebrugge.

Matthijs van Doorn, vice president commercial at Port of Rotterdam Authority, added: "As the port authority we strive for sustainable, safe and efficient hinterland connections. Therefore, this new connection provides much more than just an additional rail service. Next to more flexibility and better connectivity for our customers, it also means fewer traffic on the motorways and thus fewer emissions and less risk of traffic jams and accidents."


The TransFER starts in Linz and runs via Duisburg, Germany, to Rotterdam

The new jetty has been constructed over the old structure, which was built in the 1900s

Stolthaven jetty ready

Stolthaven Terminals' major jetty upgrade at its Dagenham, UK facility is almost complete.

Work on the jetty began in January 2022 to improve discharge rates and turnaround times for vessels, provide new and upgraded infrastructure, enhance safety and reduce environmental impact and, ultimately, deliver a superior service to customers.

The main structure – the jetty approach and head/loading platform with overhead pipe racks, plus breasting and mooring structures – were completed in October 2023. More than 50 percent of the mechanical works, including larger diameter pipelines, have already been commissioned with the remaining mechanical and electrical works expected to be finalised in the first quarter of this year.

Stolthaven Dagenham's general manager Steve Walker, said: "This is a major milestone for Dagenham and for Stolthaven Terminals. It has been a great team effort to co-ordinate this project and keep the berth operational for our customers during these complex works."

The new jetty has been constructed over the old structure, which was built in the 1900s and originally used to fit-out war vessels. It was named the Thunderer Jetty after the HMS Thunderer, the last major warship built on the Thames, which was fitted out here.

During construction, Stolthaven Dagenham recycled approximately 50 tonnes of timber which were removed from the decommissioned jetty and donated to projects including a local skate park upgrade and benches for a hospital garden.

Last year, Stolthaven Terminals also announced plans to partner with cooking oil supplier and collector Olleco to build a state-of-the-art used cooking oil (UCO) processing plant at the Dagenham facility.

www.stolt-nielsen.com

Stena opens in Frederikshavn

Stena Oil has begun operations at its new bulk liquids terminal in Frederikshavn, Denmark.

Stena Terminals, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Stena Oil, and Port of Frederikshavn, signed the takeover agreement, signifying that Stena has taken possession of the terminal.

"We have a good collaboration with Port of Frederikshavn, and we have maintained an ongoing dialogue throughout the entire process. Our focus has consistently been to kickstart our operations in Frederikshavn, and we are pleased that we have now achieved that goal," said Jonas Persson, MD of Stena Oil.

"The new terminal enables a more efficient infrastructure for us and complements the existing operations in Gothenburg (Sweden). In connection with the establishment in Frederikshavn, a newly built bunkering vessel will be deployed in the first quarter of this year to handle various types of fuels, including biofuels and methanol. One of our customers to be served from Frederikshavn is Stena Line with its ferry routes in Denmark and the Kattegat."

The terminal has a capacity of 75,000 cbm and is situated in the new areas of the port that were established in an expansion of the harbour between 2016 and 2020. Water depth is 14m.

www.stenaoil.com

Stena's Frederikshavn terminal has a capacity of 75,000 cbm

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Events

CHEMUK
15–16 May 2024
Birmingham, UK
www.chemicalukexpo.com

MultiModal NEC
11-13 June 2024
NEC, Birmingham, UK
www.multimodal.org.uk

ITCO Tank Container Village at transport logistic China 2024
25-27 June 2024
Shanghai, China
www.international-tank-container.org

EPCA 58
07-10 October 2024
Berlin, Germany
https://epca.eu/events

Intermodal Europe
12–14 November 2024
Rotterdam, Netherlands
www.intermodal-events.com

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FETSA backs EU GHG reduction

In February, the European Commission recommended that the EU reduces its net greenhouse gas emissions 90 percent by 2040 compared with 1990 levels.

The Federation of European Tank Storage Associations (FETSA), the trade body representing the bulk liquid storage sector in Europe, said it is committed to supporting the achievement of the EU's climate neutrality targets and welcomes the Commission's ambition to accelerate the energy transition through the adoption of a 90 percent GHG emissions target in 2040.

Ravi Bhatiani, executive director of FETSA, commented: "We welcome the European Commission's recommendation for a 90 percent emissions reduction target for 2040. The bulk liquid storage sector, an essential partner in the energy transition, is firmly focused on the future and on driving change as it looks to the import, production, storage and transport of new energy alternatives in the journey towards carbon neutrality.

"As we look to the future, in line with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) Synthesis Report, all options should be considered. The Synthesis Report clearly demonstrates that it is possible to limit global warming to 1.5degC by setting strategic goals and by relying on feasible, effective, and low-cost mitigation and adaptation options that are already available across sectors and countries.

"In seizing the opportunities necessary to succeed, energy access and security will also be key. In a competitive world, more prone to sanctions and weaponisation of strategic products, storage terminals will be critical in safeguarding supplies of renewable fuels of non-biological origin (RFNBOs), advanced biofuels as well as feedstocks used for the decarbonisation of industry, such as ammonia. Storage infrastructure used for carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) will also play an important part in helping industry achieve net-zero emissions in line with EU goals.

"We have also commissioned a research project exploring regional approaches to the energy transition and assessing future storage business models' suitability across regions to inform debate and discussion at a transformational time for the sector."

https://fetsa.eu

In a world more prone to weaponisation of strategic products, storage terminals will be critical in safeguarding supplies of renewable fuels, says FETSA

HERE and now in Singapore

PSA operates the world's largest container transhipment hub

Location data platform HERE Technologies is enabling PSA Singapore (PSA), which operates the world's largest container transhipment hub, to transform its container truck ecosystem in Singapore, with the goal of optimising the movement of goods at Singapore's terminals.

Port of Singapore is the world's second busiest port in terms of container volume. With global connectivity being key to its success, PSA is linked to more than 600 ports worldwide and handled 38.8 million TEU last year.

To maximise truck resource utilisation and eliminate operational inefficiencies for Singapore's container trucking community, PSA has developed OptETruck, a cloud-based transport management solution with features like automated scheduling and asset pooling for truck drivers.

Powered by HERE Tour Planning and Location Services, OptETruck allocates jobs to drivers based on their location, offering real-time optimisation of routes and truck assignments. This system not only minimises empty runs, but also ensures that drivers are allocated jobs in proximity to their current location. This improves overall transit and waiting times, drivers' well-being and operational efficiency, while reducing carbon emissions, the company claims.

Companies that adopted OptETruck have been able to demonstrate a 50 percent reduction in empty runs. This translates to an annual reduction of approximately 10 million kg of carbon emissions.

Kushal Rajveer, head of supply chain for Asia-Pacific at HERE said: "Working closely with the Digital Transformation arm of PSA, we designed a solution that uses location technology to address the specific challenges of the container truck ecosystem around Port of Singapore. We're pleased with the results from early adopters of the OptETruck, which has given PSA confidence to onboard more than 50 percent of container trucks entering and exiting Singapore's ports by end of this year."

According to HERE Technologies APAC On The Move 2023 study, logistics companies within Asia-Pacific want turn-key solutions that are easy to implement without expensive, time consuming, and labour-intensive system overhauls. This collaboration between HERE and PSA directly addresses this need by providing PSA with a seamless, easy-to-implement solution tailored to their requirements.

Sriram Ramanujam, assistant vice president, community and digital solutions at PSA added: "Our close collaboration with HERE has enabled us to push the boundaries of technology and efficiency in port logistics, and we're thrilled by the initial results. OptETruck has met the needs of Singapore's trucking community and sets the stage for a sustainable future, transforming the logistics industry into a well-connected and resilient hub, aligning perfectly with our commitment to contributing to Singapore's vision as a smart nation."

www.here.com

OptETruck allocates jobs to drivers based on their location

Rubis to sell JV stake

France's Rubis is to sell its 55% stake in Rubis Terminal to I Squared Capital.

Rubis Terminal is a leading player in European bulk liquid storage sector with 4 million cbm of capacity across France, Spain, and the Northern Europe hubs of Antwerp and Rotterdam.

Rubis structured Rubis Terminal into a JV with I Squared (45 percent holding) in 2020 as part of a strategy of product diversification and geographic expansion.

By acquiring full control, I Squared will seek to leverage its financial capability to grow Rubis Terminal alongside the existing management team.

The net sale price for the 55 percent stake held by Rubis would amount to €375 million.

The estimated €75 million capital gain generated from the sale would be fully returned to shareholders through an exceptional dividend payment of €0.75 per share to take place after closing.

www.rubis.fr