

European surfactant market forecast

A \$10,000 multi-client study conducted by Colin A. Houston & Associates, Inc., of Mamaroneck, NY, predicts a strong, recession-proof market throughout the present decade for surfactants in West Europe. The study, "Surfactants in West Europe for Household and Personal Care Products," shows high growth rates expected in specific countries and a bright future ahead for selected surfactant types.

According to the study, surfactant consumption in household and personal care products averaged 5.6% each year from 1976 to 1980, reaching 1,377 thousand metric tons. That is expected to top 1,600 thousand metric tons by 1990. The alcohol-based surfactants, particularly alcohol ethoxylate, are projected to experience excellent growth throughout the 1980s. However, linear alkylbenzene sulfonate will continue to be the most important product, accounting for about 40 percent of synthetic surfactant consumption.

Countries where high growth rates are expected include three of the four largest consumers of surfactants: France, Italy and the United Kingdom. High growth markets also exist in Portugal, Spain and Norway.

The study shows European fabric washing powder formulations are being changed to favor low temperature, low foaming washes. Procter & Gamble's new "Ariel Automatic," launched in the United Kingdom, illustrates this trend, Houston said. This product uses twice as much alcohol ethoxylate as linear alkylbenzene sulfonate, and contains no soap. Meanwhile, phosphate limitations in some countries are causing shifts toward less efficient builders such as zeolites. Slightly higher activities can be expected in fabric washing powders using zeolites instead of phosphates.

The new heavy duty fabric washing liquid market represents one of the brightest spots for surfactant usage. Procter & Gamble and Henkel have introduced products which contain over 40% surfactant into West Germany, Austria and France (Procter & Gamble only). Formulations so far have been based on linear alkylbenzene sulfonate, alcohol ethoxylate and soap. The study predicts heavy duty liquids could hold 12% of the laundry detergent market by 1990.

Another new product area in Western Europe is liquid soaps. These products, introduced in the last year or so, are expected to duplicate the phenomenal success of their U.S. counterparts. Alcohol sulfate and ethoxysulfate are the surfactants most commonly used in these products. Figures show liquid soaps will attain a seven to eight percent share of the toilet soap market by 1985.

Meanwhile, shampoos continue to grow at a brisk rate in West Europe, with consumption projected to top 320,000 metric tons by 1990. Shampoos, the largest consumer of surfactants in the personal care market, use alcohol ethoxysulfates as their prime ingredients. However, increasing amounts of amphoteric and alcohol sulfates will be used during the forecast period.

According to the study findings, raw materials positioning, production flexibility and astute targeting of markets will be the keys to success in exploiting surfactant opportunities in West Europe in the 1980s.

Stepan enlarges pilot plant

Stepan Chemical Company Inc., independent producer of sulfonated surfactants for detergents, personal care and industrial products, has begun a major long-range expansion of its pilot plant capabilities.

The first phase of the multi-million dollar program was to construct and equip the industry's most advanced pilot process sulfonation reactor and formulation buildings on an eight-acre site within the firm's 380-acre Millsdale complex, Joliet, IL. Completion of this first phase, estimated to cost \$3-million, was expected by July 1, 1982. Future plans include construction and conversion of other buildings for pilot process research and development over the next several years.

Stepan Chemical Company is a major producer of basic and intermediate chemicals with advanced expertise in surfactant, polymer and specialty chemical development and production technologies.

Cosmetic seminar Sept. 9

"Dry Skin Products: Safety and Efficacy Evaluation" will be the topic of a day-long seminar on Thursday, Sept. 9, to be held at the Howard Johnson's O'Hare Hotel in Schiller Park, Illinois, under sponsorship of the Midwest Chapter of the Society of Cosmetic Chemists.

The event will be the chapter's 8th annual seminar and is tentatively scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and end at 5 p.m. Further details and registration information will be available from Norman Meltzer of Helene Curtis Industries (312-292-2160). Meltzer is in charge of the programs for the chapter.

SDA chairman at White House

Allen H. Howland, chairman of the board for The Soap and Detergent Association, was among several industry leaders greeted by President Reagan at the White House earlier this year during National Poison Prevention Week. The SDA, which represents products of most of the nation's domestic cleaning products, is an original member of the poison prevention council and publishes several leaflets on safety in use of household cleaners. Howland is chairman of the board and chief executive officer for the Original Bradford Soaps Works Inc. of West Warwick, Rhode Island.