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Sribash Dasmohapatra, the executive chairman of the Plastics Export Promotion Council (Plexconcil) speaks to Aditya Ghosalkar about India’s plastics industry. He sheds light about the plastics-export-focussed exhibition, Plexconnect 2024, which was held from 7 to 9 June.

19 Jun 2024 | By [Aditya Ghosalkar](#)

Ad



“A key driver behind this surge is the diversification of export products,” says Sribash Dasmohapatra

Packaging stands as one of India’s significant export sectors, with rigid and flexible packaging, including films and sheets, being central to the industry. The industry saw a notable surge in exports during December 2023 and January 2024 despite fluctuating global economic conditions. This surge reflects the resilience of the Indian plastics sector and the increasing demand for Indian plastic products in international markets.

Currently, Indian plastics find their way into the markets of 200 countries, targeting the emerging markets of Central America. Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Mexico emerge as promising hubs. With the support of Indian high commissions and embassies, Plexconcil aims at India’s untapped reservoir of opportunities awaiting exploration on the global stage.

Looking at numbers

Sribash Dasmohapatra, the executive director of Plexconcil says the Indian plastics industry will boost its export value from the current USD 12-billion to a USD 25-billion by 2027. Globally, the market size is about USD 1.3-trillion and India has an 1.1% market share.

In December 2023, India’s plastic exports stood at USD 1.1-billion, which is a 12.7% increase from the previous year. Similarly, in January, the momentum continued with exports surging to USD 916-million, showcasing a 5% rise from 2023. India’s plastic packaging exports, comprising flexible and rigid packaging, have a crucial role in this growth.

“A key driver behind this surge is the diversification of export products. For instance, consumer houseware products witnessed a 139% increase in exports, reaching USD 140-million in December 2023 compared to USD 62-million in the previous year,” Dasmohapatra

says. Additionally, exports of FRP and composite products saw a significant 4% increase, reflecting growing demand for a wide range of plastic goods.”

Focus on sustainability

Beyond crunching numbers, sustainability continues to remain as a central concern in the industry, driven by increasing environmental consciousness worldwide. Recyclability and reusability are now paramount considerations.

There is a notable gap between proposed government regulations on recyclability and their actual implementation across various stakeholders in the plastic value chain, including brand owners, recyclers, and converters.

“Efforts are underway to bridge this divide by raising awareness, enhancing collection methods, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders,” says Dasmohapatra. “India stands out for its higher recycling rate compared to many other countries. There are multiple initiatives aimed at educating and empowering consumers to manage waste responsibly.”

Education in polymers and plastics is gaining increasing prominence as the plastics industry continues to expand. Academic institutions and specialised training programs are recognising the growing demand for skilled professionals in this field.

On 12 May 2023, Plexconcil with a clean energy solutions advocate Greenmyna organised a beach clean-up drive at Carter Road Beach, Bandra, Mumbai. The drive gathered over 150 volunteers, including Plexconcil COA members from the Western region, council officials, students from the Institute of Chemical Technology, Indian Institute of Technology and Indian Plastic Institute, Mumbai and environmentally-conscious citizens.

Opportunities ahead

Challenges first. The high manufacturing costs, particularly the exorbitant electricity tariffs. Unlike counterparts like China, where government support abounds, Indian manufacturers grapple with unfavourable conditions.

Dasmohapatra believes, “There is immense potential for India’s plastic exports, especially in emerging markets such as Central America. With concerted efforts from industry players and government support, India aims to capitalise on this potential by expanding its presence in promising markets like Guatemala, Costa Rica, Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador”.

Plexconcil eyes at USD 100 million plastics export across Central America in the coming three to four years. Strategic initiatives such as foreign trade agreements and the “China plus one strategy” spotlight India as a beacon of reliability and diversification in the global supply chain.

Collaboration

In June 2023, Plexconcil hosted the first-ever plastics export-focussed exhibition - Plexconnect. The show generated business inquiries valued at over USD 16.1 million, while

deals valued at about USD 5.3 million were finalised. More than 400 buyers from across 51 countries participated in the reverse buyer seller meets, where in all, 4,161 B2B meetings, and both buyers and exporters expressed satisfaction with their discussions.

The second edition of Plexconnect transpired from 7 to 9 June 2024. The three-day show hosted the latest advancements in processing, machinery, moulds, dies, auxiliary equipment, printing and packaging, raw materials, and beyond.

At the inaugural meet, Dasmohapatra mentions: The Indian government's free-trade agreements and the new Foreign Trade Policy have boosted the MSME sector's growth. GOI's incentives and schemes, including those from the MSME Ministry, DoC, have empowered businesses by facilitating exports.

On the sidelines of the Plexconnect show, Plexconcil organised a Export Excellence Awards show to recognise industry leaders and top export performers. The awards show presented a total of 47 awards across categories like export performance, innovation and sustainability, women entrepreneurs, among others.

Outlook

Looking ahead, Dasmohapatra says, "The increasing demand in eCommerce, food packaging, pharmaceuticals, and consumer products for both flexible and rigid plastics indicates a rising trend towards the adoption of biodegradable alternatives, recyclable and recycled content, and innovative materials. This shift is expected to gain momentum in the upcoming years."

Given our industry's technological advancements in manufacturing, there is now growing synergy between processors, brand owners and recyclers from the design stage to the end of the life cycle. This ensures monitoring of the manufactured products in conformance to environmental sustainability.

The new extended producer responsibility (EPR) guidelines and the National Packaging Initiative have helped promote greater investments in materials, products and processes to meet ESG goals.

Tags : [PLEXCONCIL](#), [Plexconnect 2024](#)

NEXT STORY

How Ludhiana-based Nahar's 40-year presence in corrugation found its mojo

"The per kilo conversion cost is high, and so, brown box manufacturers are left with no course of action but to charge a set up cost for orders below the MOQ. This is an ongoing challenge for any new client with a smaller lot or single time orders". So say the father-daughter duo, Rajnish and Aashriya Jain of Nahar Paperboard in a freewheeling conversation with Abhay Avadhani of WhatPackaging?