

Chemexcil Trade Show 2013

Plenty of hurdles await Australian companies wanting to import chemicals from Asia. I should know – I have spent the last few months trying to find an affordable supplier of a chemical not manufactured in Australia. I readily admit that I am a novice at international sourcing, but I approached the task with my characteristic optimism: ‘How hard can it be?’ As it turns out, it can be surprisingly difficult.

Starting with a major online chemical trading site, I mostly encountered time wasters and the occasional product misrepresentation. Mostly an exercise in frustration, it did at least lead me to one potential supplier in India. However, although the supplier’s English was infinitely better than my (non-existent) Hindi, communication limitations were hindering progress.

Even after contact with the Indo-Australian Chamber of Commerce in Chennai, I couldn’t seem to gain any traction, and with other priorities demanding my attention I let the matter lapse.

Enter Chemexcil (www.chemexcil.gov.in), set up under the aegis of the Indian Ministry of Commerce & Industry in 1963. With more than 4000 members, Chemexcil provides a free service as a single point source of contacts to help overseas buyers in sourcing from India. In its own words, its role is ‘to create a favourable environment to augment exports and acts as one point source of information for sourcing a variety of specialty chemicals covering basic organic and inorganic chemicals, dyes & dye intermediaries, cosmetics, toiletries & essential oils and castor oils from India.’

Following a successful visit in 2012, Chemexcil’s second Buyer-Seller Market visited Sydney in late September. As appropriate to the importance of the event, its opening was attended by such dignitaries as his Excellency, Mr Arun Kumar Goel, Consul General of India in Sydney and the Hon. Dr Geoff Lee, New South Wales MP for Parramatta ... and face-in-the-crowd, yours truly.

The speakers at the opening ceremony were justifiably pleased to point to some of the impressive statistics coming out of the Indian chemical industry, which is growing at 22.9% year-on-year. Producing over 70 000 commercial products, it is the world’s third largest manufacturer of chemicals (after China and Japan), generating US\$108 billion of export revenue for the country.

It was my pleasure to sit down with Mrs Vaishali Zinzuwadia, Regional Director for Chemexcil, to talk about trends, issues and challenges facing Indian industry. Vaishali was particularly keen to talk about steady improvements in environmental outcomes for the Indian chemicals industries after substantial government



investment, first in shared CETPs (common effluent treatment plants) and then in green chemistry projects to further improve in-process recycling.

With tightening federal environmental regulation in India and state governments following suit (including through closure of polluting businesses), industry attention is being paid to other critical factors – skilled labour supply and capacity growth, both in the industry itself and the debottlenecking of the export ports.

Also high on India’s agenda is international perception of quality. According to the Chemexcil Exhibition media release ‘It is a known fact that Indian products have the world-class quality [and] are manufactured in state-of-art facilities at very competitive prices, which are [a] threat to Chinese and European products. India, therefore, has many a time faced malicious anti media campaign against their products, by multinationals.’ Vaishali was keen to point out that all 46 of the sellers attending the market (up from 18 last year) are ISO9000-certified manufacturers, saying that ‘I understand quality issues. I urge them. Chemexcil is just a mouse click away, and we are here to help out.’

Coming back to my own circumstances, I chatted with multiple suppliers to initiate information exchange on potentially useful products for my business, and I have been warmly invited by Vaishali to provide further information so that she can facilitate my investigations.

I still expect plenty of challenges in pursuing my international trade, but with Chemexcil’s support I’m positive that progress will accelerate from here. For Australian companies with chemical supply needs across the range of organics, inorganics, dyes, cosmetics and intermediates, Chemexcil could prove to be an excellent resource.

Dave Sammut MRACI CChem is Principal at DCS Technical Pty Ltd. DCS Technical attended the Chemexcil Trade Show at the request of *Chemistry in Australia* for no payment. A gift was received at the event.