## RPM International to Buy Legend Brands

SpecialChem | Mark Drukenbrod - Sep 27, 2011

Hello and welcome to your early week international coatings industry update, brought to you by SpecialChem. There was lots of news in the industry since Thursday, so let's get right to it.

RPM International Inc., which makes Rust-Oleum as well as industrial coatings, sealants and building materials, said Thursday it will buy Legend Brands, a company that, offers restoration and cleaning products. Financial terms were undisclosed.

Legend Brands, based in Burlington, Washington, USA, is made up of three units: Dri-Eaz Products, which makes tools for water damage restoration and environmental control; ProRestore Products, which makes odor, smoke and microbial control products; and Sapphire Scientific, which makes carpet cleaning products. RPM, based in Medina, Ohio, USA traditionally focuses on protecting buildings from outside elements, but the acquisition will extend its products to restoring property when elements infiltrate a structure, said RPM CEO Frank Sullivan.

One interesting business relationship in the search for renewable biomass feedstocks is the partnership of Gevo, a renewable chemicals company in Colorado, USA, and Lanxess. Together, scientists from both companies are now making progress in producing isobutene, a key raw material from renewable resources. Traditionally, isobutene has been produced in steam crackers, which requires various petrochemical-based materials for feedstock.

The researchers have now created a breakthrough dehydration process that converts isobutanol into isobutene. In this process, water is removed from the isobutanol. The result is biologically obtained isobutene. The dehydration process has not only proven to be successful in the laboratory, but has also undergone several months of practical testing in a small-scale reactor at Lanxess' site in Leverkusen, Germany.

PPG is increasing the production capacity of precipitated silica at two of its manufacturing sites. The move is in response to increasing global demand, the company said in a statement. Expansion projects are slated for plants in Lake Charles, Louisiana, USA, and Delfzijl, Netherlands. The projects will boost production capacity by more than 18,000 tons per year.

"PPG is committed to the precipitated silica market, and these investments will enable us to continue meeting the growing needs of our customers for high-quality precipitated silica," said Kevin Braun, PPG General Manager, Silica Products, in a written statement. The cost of the investment was not disclosed but the increased capacity could start production in the fourth quarter of this year and the projects are expected to be completed by the end of 2012.

We don't often do sports trivia here, but here's a piece of coatings-related news that I couldn't help but pass along.

Early last spring Frazee Paint, a west coast paint manufacturer announced a partnership with the San Diego Padres. With this partnership came a season long promotion in which Frazee Paint built a 10-foot-tall paint can and offered a $500,000 reward to the Padres Foundation if any of the San Diego Padres players hit a homerun into the can.

If the Padres were not able to hit a home run into the can during the season, Frazee Paint would support the Padres Foundation with an end-of season donation of $20,000. Last Saturday, fans of the San Diego Padres along with members of both Frazee Paint and the Padres Foundation will gather at Petco Park during the pre-game ceremony to take part in the presentation of the gift.

"Frazee's donation to the Padres Foundation is part of our long-standing and on-going commitment to the San Diego community," said Donna Seaton, VP of National Sales. "On behalf of Frazee's over 350 San Diego employees, we are proud to partner with the Padres in supporting local programs for our region's children."

In India business news, Asian Paints and PPG Industries will expand their current 50-50 joint venture - Asian PPG Industries Ltd (APPG) - to establish a second joint venture. Asian Paints said its Board had approved a composite scheme for merger and demerger, under which PPG India, PPG Coatings India (subsidiaries of PPG in India) and AP Coatings (a wholly owned subsidiary of Asian Paints) will merge with APPG.

The plan provides for the demerger of the liquid industrial paints, powder coatings and protective coatings businesses from APPG into

the second joint venture. The sanction of the composite scheme is subject to the approval of the Madras High Court and the Bombay High Court, it added.

I remember that in the dawning days of waterborne automotive paints, this type of story was hitting the news every few weeks. Not so much lately, though. The problem is apparently bubbling paint on some Ford and Mercury products, and appears too wide spread to ignore, if Internet social media sources are to be believed.

Apparently, thousands of car owners are having similar peeling problems and there is even a Facebook page dedicated to Ford-Mercury peeling paint problems.

The problem, according to former consultants to the auto industry, is a business model that puts paint suppliers in charge of quality control inside carmakers' plants. That, they allege, has resulted in two major problems now bedeviling car owners: thin paint, and corroded parts that lead to peeling paint.

It's a problem that Steve Gaiski, a Chemical Engineer and Former Consultant to the Auto Industry, says Ford Motor Company knows all too well.

"Several years back they hired us to do a study of all their facilities. And so we did and came back and said my gosh, do you realize you have thin paint in all your facilities?" Gaiski said.

To be clear, the problem isn't just with Ford. Gaiski says other automakers face the same issue. But none have been hit harder with complaints, Gaiski says, than Ford. After Gaiski and his colleagues raised the issue with Ford, he says the carmaker had no interest in the research it paid for. Three weeks after raising a red flag, Gaiski says his company's contract was terminated. Ultimately, the company sent him a "cease and desist" letter.

"I've been instructed by Ford basically, 'stop contacting us,'" he said. "Now, as of 2011, what's happening ... it's ridiculous!"

Ford is no stranger to the problems of peeling paint: in recent years, it has issued technical Service Bulletins on a number of Ford, Lincoln and Mercury vehicles that suffered from "aluminum corrosion" which led to 'bubbling to blistering under the paint"

Nationally, a problem involving Crown Victoria police cruisers in dozens of cities led to another TSB and repairs. Internationally, in Australia, one shade of blue paint on a Ford prompted a recall.

A Ford spokesperson would not comment on Steve Gaiski's allegations, but offered the following statement regarding Ford paint:
Ford vehicles, including the Expedition, offer high-quality paint that is very durable. Ford continually monitors its vehicles and is confident paint on our vehicles performs at or beyond customer expectations. When customers have questions, we work quickly to resolve their concerns.

Members of the University of Southern Mississippi's School of Polymers and High Performance Materials paid homage Friday to one of the folks who helped bring that research to its current lofty status.

That man is the late Sidney Lauren, a longtime prominent figure in the coatings industry who for years helped provide scholarship dollars to Southern Miss' polymer science students in his capacity as on-and-off director of the Washington, D.C.-based Coatings Industry Education Foundation.

"We've reached a zenith of national recognition. We are a well-recognized program nationally," polymer science professor Bob Lochhead said. "Now that wouldn't have been possible without the contributions of the CIEF and the coatings industry."

Faculty members unveiled the Sidney Lauren Memorial Center, located in the Polymer Science Research Center.

It's actually a center with two faces. One is the physical space placed in what was formerly a storage room adjoining a first-floor coating lab. It contains an archive of coatings-related materials, as well as books and certificates from Lauren's career.

There also will be an online learning center, set to go live Nov. 1, with access to lectures, resources and patents.

The CIEF is funding the center. Members presented the $50,000 check to Southern Miss during the unveiling. "It's an idea that the CIEF put together to honor Sid and find a home and a place to hang his name. There is nothing more appropriate than a fine institute like USM," said George Schmitz, director of the CIEF.

Lauren's children, David and Barbara Lauren, both present, also donated $2,500 each. Lauren, who died in 2010, worked for several coating corporations and was executive director of the Coatings Research Group from 1972-1985 in addition to his CIEF duties.

Shelby Thames, who founded Southern Miss' polymer science program in 1970, said that Lauren's support in scholarships (Thames estimates that 90 percent of the program's graduates received CIEF GPA-based scholarships) helped recruit and support polymer students.

"We were able to tell students, 'Would an industry give monies to give to you almost a free education, if they weren't willing to hire you?' "Thames said.

Lochhead said that the CIEF now donates between $20,000 and $50,000 each year in scholarships, coming to about $1,000 per student.

"Now we generate millions of dollars from the federal government and private industry," Lochhead said. "But it was once our primary source of funding."

In other news, the latest ASTM D7588, Guide for FT-IR Fingerprinting of a Non-Aqueous Liquid Paint as Supplied in the Manufacturer's Container, is under the jurisdiction of Subcommittee D01.21 on Chemical Analysis of Paints and Paint Materials, which is part of ASTM International Committee D01 on Paint and Related Coatings, Materials and Applications ... more about this news

The Performance Monomers business of The Dow Chemical Company announced that capacity for the production of Crude Acrylic Acid at its Bühlen, Germany facility has expanded by 25%. This represents the cumulative result of several successful debottlenecking and reliability initiatives that address Dow's need to raise CAA capacity ... more about this news

After a rain, the cupped leaf of a pitcher plant becomes a virtually frictionless surface. Adopting the plant's slick strategy, a group of applied scientists at Harvard have created a material that repels just about any type of liquid, including blood and oil, and does so even under harsh conditions like high pressure and freezing temperatures ... more about this news

And finally, Celanese Corporation, a global technology and specialty materials company and among the global leaders in emulsion polymers, announced that it will hike the price of all vinyl acetate/ethylene (VAE) emulsions sold in the Americas by $0.03 / wet pound, effective October 15, 2011, or as contracts allow ... more about this news