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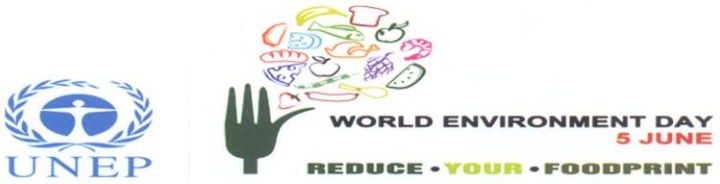
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2013



"In a world of seven billion people, set to grow to nine billion by 2050, wasting food makes no sense – economically, environmentally and ethically, aside from the cost implications, all the land, water, fertilizers and labour needed to grow that food is wasted – not to mention the generation of greenhouse gas emissions produced by food decomposing on landfill and the transport of food that is ultimately thrown away.

- UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner

World Environment Day (WED) is an annual initiative of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) aimed at being the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. The official theme for the World Environment Day on June 5, 2013 was'Think.Eat.Save'. Think.Eat.Save, is an anti-food waste and food loss campaign that encourages individuals to reduce their foodprint. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), every year 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted. This is equivalent to the same amount produced in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, 1 in every 7 people in the world go to bed hungry and more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 die daily from hunger. While the planet is struggling to provide us with enough resources to sustain its 7 billion people (growing to 9 billion by 2050), FAO estimates that a third of global food production is either wasted or lost. Chemicals in the form of fertilizers, agronutrients, food additives and those used for crop protection are used to grow, develop, process, package, preserve, store, and distribute foods and beverages. When food is wasted a lot of energy, resources, plant growth and health substances are wasted. Food waste thus is an enormous drain on natural and other needed resources and a contributor to negative environmental impacts.

Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Environment and Forests releasing a book on the occasion of World Environment Day

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India celebrates WED

"I would like to make an appeal and say that this government stands firmly behind sustainable development, firmly behind the question of India subscribing totally to climate change, to stop climate change from impacting and degrading our environment while at the same time protecting India's right to develop internationally and this government will stand firm in making sure that this planet, our country is protected and handed over in full to the next generation," said Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Enviromnent & Forests on the occasion of World EnvironmentDay-2013. To mark the event, the minister also released a book on Coastal Zones of India and two atlases, namely, National Wetlands Atlas: High Altitude Lakes of India and National Wetlands Atlas: Wetlands of International Importance under Ramsar Convention. Many other leading NGO's and private organizations held various events throughout the country to mark the event.

Chemical Industry observes WED

To commemorate the World Environment day, various organizations including chemical companies organized activities like tree plantation drives, exhibitions, poster making competitions, seminars, educational and awareness drives. Most of the leading and progressive chemical and allied companies are not only conscious of the need to adhere to best environmental practices, they are introducing cleaner and greener processes, shifting to environmentally benign products and processes and revisiting existing chemistries and manufacturing systems to align with sustainability objectives.

Given below are a few examples of activities organized by some of the companies and case studies in pollution control and sustainability.

Tata Chemicals

On the occasion of World Environment day, Mr. Sanjay Choudhary, Chief Technology and Sustainability Officer, Tata Chemicals Ltd. said, "Tata Chemicals has a clear policy of `Avoid, Reduce, Integrate and Recycle' that governs its business practices, with a strong emphasis on resource use efficiency and reduction and reuse of wastes."

Tata Chemicals has developed a range of products that help reduce environmental impact at its Innovation Center in Pune like the nano-silver water purifier, nutraceuticals, nano metal oxides etc. Rallis India, a subsidiary of Tata Chemicals, is developing innovative green crops protection solutions.

Developing environment-friendly processes

Tata Chemicals has invested in developing alternative and more environment-friendly biofuels with its investment in jatropha seed R&D. The company uses renewable sources of energy where possible: solar energy to produce salt, biomass fuel for hot air generators, etc. Its effort in greening of waste saline lands using micorrhiza fungal culture along with TERI has been recognized as innovation in CSR. All three plants at Haldia, Babrala and Mithapur have instituted measures to recycle and reuse waste water, harvest rain water, and reduce consumption and the company conducts water footprint audits. It has adopted various desalination technologies like Reverse Osmosis, Multi Stage Flash Distillation and Waste heat desalination at its chemicals complex at Mithapur in Gujarat for reducing dependence on fresh water. Tata Chemicals has registered several clean development mechanism (CDM) projects with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Employees of Tata Chemicals planting trees to mark WED

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Change (UNFCCC); these projects relate to energy reduction and methane reduction. Some of the activities conducted by Tata Chemicals include tree plantation, environment awareness rally, knowledge sharing session on energy conservation and management, and photography-the best and worst photo indicating environmental conditions.

Heubach Colour Pvt. Ltd

Noted American author, Earl Nightingale, once said, "Our environment, the world in which we live and work, is a mirror of our attitudes and expectations". Heubach Colour Pvt. Ltd. reflects the same philosophy at its 3 production units, spread across the industrial corridor of Ankleshwar in Gujarat. HCPL has pursued implementation of a comprehensive "Environment Protection" management plan which includes process optimization, pollution prevention measures, integrated waste management and product stewardship. The company employs methods such as solvent recycling and integrated waste management to make its processes environmentally efficient. As part of Heubach's philosophy of waste management, the company has tweaked its manufacturing processes and systems to reduce the sludge generation (waste) by 75 percent. Spent Aluminium Chloride solution generated during CPC Green synthesis process is purified and copper is recovered. The Aluminium Chloride liquor free from all impurities is reacted with soda ash solution to precipitate Aluminium Hydroxide. Aluminium Hydroxide slurry is filtered and washed for removal of salt and other water soluble impurities. Washed cake is dried and packed as per requirement after approval from Quality Assurance department. Heubach Colour has thus managed to reduce consumption of aluminum chloride by 20% thereby saving raw material usage and cutting down sludge generation. Granular activated carbon columns have also been set up to bring down the refractory COD by 50%.

Ariel view of Heubach's Aluminium Hydroxide plant

Lanxess India Pvt. Ltd

From Lanxess India Pvt. Ltd. point of view, reducing fugitive emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC) during storage, handling and use, reducing carbon footprint and minimizing outflow of 'greenhouse' gases are some of the key focus areas for sustainable manufacturing. Lanxess believes what's good for business, is good for society. Safety, environmental protection, social responsibility, quality and commercial efficiency are all key corporate goals at Lanxess. Lanxess conserves natural resources and uses renewable energy wherever possible. Moreover, their innovative production processes help reduce CO_2 emissions. These include developing bio-based raw materials, implementing zero discharge concept, extremely modern plants for exhaust air de-contamination, CO_2 recovery and reducing nitrogenous emissions. It has taken steps to reduce CO_2 emissions by 10% until 2015, reduce VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) emissions by 30% until 2015, reduce specific energy consumption by 10% until 2015 and record zero incidents at sites. Lanxess' cogeneration plant at the site in Nagda, is fuelled by biomass (soya and mustard husk), and thus prevents about 70,000 metric tons of coal from being burnt annually, saving about 95,000 tons of CO_2 equivalents per year. Similarly, the one in Jhagadia runs on eco-friendly natural gas and helps reduce emissions by 31,000 tons of CO_2 equivalents per year. Taking another step towards sustainability, Lanxess commissioned a waste water post treatment plant wherein the water recovered from the waste water post treatment plant will be used for the production processes, which will bridge the gap in availability of water.

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Monarch Catalyst Pvt. Ltd.

According to Monarch Catalyst Pvt. Ltd. green catalytic chemistry is a step in the right direction to achieve environmental sustainability and economic strength. Monarch firmly believes in reducing and recycling waste products, eliminating health hazards, preserving natural resources, and supports the fight against climate change. In order to control air pollution, the company has upgraded the scrubbing system of the incinerator's by installing a heat recovery system. In pursuit of a cleaner and greener environment, Monarch started a 'Solid Acid-Base (SAB) catalyst division', which strives to understand the perpetual problems faced by the industry. Monarch has also planted more than 10000 trees around its campus and has initiated rain water harvesting. The company plans to utilize compressed natural gas (CNG) to minimize environment pollution. Monarch celebrated World Environment Day by spreading awareness among its staff through a quiz program.

Siemens India

In one such sustainable solutions initiative, Siemens India, through a paper innovation celebrated the World Environment Day 2013 in a unique way. Seeds embedded in a piece of paper were sown in the soil, helping a tree to grow. Siemens not only encouraged its staff members to participate in this noble initiative but it also extended an invitation to the general public to spread general awareness.

Siemens celebrates WED at its Worli head office in Mumbai

Wacker Chemie AG

Other leading companies like Wacker Chemie AG are doing their best to protect environment. In the last fiscal year, Wacker invested € 8.6 million in environmental protection. By implementing numerous productivity measures, especially its Power Plus energy efficiency program, the group has managed to cut its energy consumption by 22 percent since 2007. Its goal is to achieve 33 percent energy savings by 2022. Products from Wacker, for example, help to save energy and to lower emissions of greenhouse gases. In the construction sector, silicone sealants, silicone masonry protection agents, and dispersible polymer powders are used as component parts of exterior insulation and finish systems insulate buildings efficiently and thus help lower heating and operating costs. In automotive engineering, silicone potting materials, gaskets, turbocharger hoses and engine mounts are helping to make vehicles lighter and more fuel-efficient. Wacker products are also proving indispensable in the field of renewable energies, whether in the field of photovoltaics, wind power or future maritime sea-wave converters.

Time for reflection

World Environment Day 2013 is an opportunity to reflect on the importance of a 'green' economy in improving human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. **Chemical Industry Digest** had stressed on the importance of Green economy in its previous issue (Vol. XXV.6) on Environment Day. It is also an opportunity to think about how we are progressing as a nation towards a clean and renewable energy future.

The global food production occupies 25% of all habitable land and is responsible for 70% of fresh water consumption, 80% of deforestation, and 30% of greenhouse gas emissions. It is the largest single driver of biodiversity loss and land-use change. Making informed decision therefore means, for example, that you purposefully select foods that have less of an environmental impact, such as organic foods that do not use chemicals in the production process. Choosing to buy locally can also mean that foods are not flown halfway across the world and therefore limit emissions and also help in reducing our already inflated import bill. We need to thus **think** before we **eat** and help **save** our environment !