



Recycling and the term 'environmentally friendly' still mean many different things to different people.

BY JANE SMITH

LIP SERVICE NO MORE

However, one thing is for sure – since the early '80s and emergence of groups such as 'Greenpeace' and 'Friends of the Earth', world opinion and in turn countries, companies and individuals are starting to understand the complexity of the subject and also its importance.

'Lip service' on the subject is becoming a thing of the past as individuals, organisations and governments start to take responsibility for the impact we are having on the world around us. We now hear words such

as 'sustainability' being used and there is healthy debate about what is the best way of minimising the impact of our production methods and waste management. The subject is a big one. We've taken a few examples of recent developments to show how the trends are developing.

Nearly all of us now have to sort our own household waste (degradable garden waste, cardboard, plastic and glass, general household waste) and in business the new regulations for packaging waste came into effect during last year. This is an initiative designed to assign responsibility for recycling packaging material to all parts of the supply chain. All companies over a certain size now have to declare the amount of packaging they use and take responsibility for ensuring that a percentage of that is disposed of for recycling purposes. The government targets are that by 2006 overall recovery will be 60–75% and that overall recycling of waste will be 55–70%. The WEEE directive is the next piece of legislation coming into force in 2006. It stands for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment and aims to minimise the impacts of electrical and electronic equipment on their environment during their lifetimes and when they become waste.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

These initiatives are all part of central government's sustainable waste management strategy and 'dovetails' nicely into CSR, another trend that is building in the private sector and one which the government thoroughly supports. It stands for Corporate Social Responsibility and addresses environmental and/or purchasing policies within it. Increasingly organisations are taking a long hard look at the social and environmental impacts of their activities and the positive arguments for purchasing and specifying materials and products manufactured from recovered materials.

Within our industry paper of course is the first thing people think of when it comes to recycling. But as we discovered there is not just one answer when looking at the subject. Here are three very different examples.

FSC 'labelled' paper is becoming more and more accepted as one way of ensuring that paper purchased is made using pulp from sustainable sources. FSC stands for Forestry Stewardship Council and is an independent body, supported by Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. The WWF95 group that includes companies such as WHSmith, Woolworth's and B&Q are adopting purchasing

policies that include FSC principles. The principle is to promote sustainable forestry with felling and transportation methods that minimise damage to flora and fauna. Neusiedler are very active in working towards FSC certification for their raw materials and are currently working closely with their supplier in Russia to achieve accreditation.

EVOLVING MARKET

M-real, who produce the 100% high quality recycled business paper Evolve also takes environmental issues very seriously. Evolve is developed from 100% post consumer waste that is collected from London and the south East. Each year, M-real collects around 180,000 tonnes of recovered paper that is recycled at its Recycled Fibre Plant in Kemsley, Kent. Their unique system corresponds to all aspects of the paper life-cycle including forestry practices, waste treatment, energy use, recycling and management systems.

Another way in which the paper industry supports environmental issues is by its marketing initiatives. Talk Paper have introduced a new range of papers called Symbio and are supporting The Born Free Association as part of their launch programme.

Perhaps the other most talked product range when it comes to the environment would be laser and inkjet cartridges. As we consume more and more of these products as a society we have to be concerned about the issues of waste disposal and the virtues of recycling. OEMs such as Hitachi Dataproducts and Xerox have introduced their own collection and recycling schemes as well as the compatible manufacturer's such as IT Image who depend upon the supply of spent cartridges for their very existence. And as recycler's themselves they also have well defined CSR policies. Eva Mowbray of IT Image told us that their policy was to recycle everything possible including waste packaging, wooden pallets, paper, staff drinks containers and office waste. I think we will all soon be compelled to follow suit. ■