

Europe's Polypropylene Fibre Industry is Still a World Player

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Abstracts

Europe is the world's largest producer of polypropylene fibres and the second largest man-made fibre producing continent, behind Asia. It also boasts the biggest single-site units for producing acrylic and viscose fibres.

In the case of acrylic, AKSA Acrylic, a subsidiary of AKK?K Group, has a site near Yalova in Turkey with a capacity for making 308,000 tons of acrylic fibres—12% of the global total. In the case of viscose, the Austrian company Lenzing has a site located in Lenzing, Austria, with a capacity for making 255,000 tons of viscose fibre and a further 250,000 tons of pulp.

Collectively, European countries produced 3.2 mn tons of man-made fibres in 2009. In value terms, these were worth Euro10.5 bn (US\$14.6 bn), of which export sales were worth Euro2 bn. The European man-made fibre industry still has some 25,000 employees, and has ploughed over Euro1 bn into R&D over the past five years.

The position of the European man-made fibre industry is partly due to the critical role it plays in the production of polypropylene fibres—which go predominantly into technical end uses. By contrast, the continent's role as a producer of polyester has diminished markedly over the years—a contrast which was highlighted at two recent conferences held on successive days in Brussels, Belgium.

According to the director general of CIRFS and the EATP, Colin Purvis², world man-made fibre production was dominated by Europe, the USA and Japan for 50 years from 1950 to 2000.

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