

Martek to Work With BP Biofuels

Associated Press in the Washington Post Wed., Aug. 12, 2009

Martek Biosciences said it will work with BP to mass-produce biodiesel from sugar. The agreement partners one of the largest petroleum companies in the world with Columbia-based Martek, which specializes in engineering fuel and other products from algae, fungi and other microbes.

"As an alternative to conventional vegetable oils, we believe sugar-to-diesel technology has the potential to deliver economic, sustainable and scalable biodiesel supplies," said Philip New, chief executive of BP Biofuels.

BP will contribute up to \$10 million as part of the collaboration, while Martek will perform the biotechnology research and development.

Va. Judge Voids Coal Plant Permit

Associated Press in the Washington Post Wed., Aug. 12, 2009

In a victory for environmental groups, a Richmond judge on Tuesday invalidated a permit for a coal-burning power plant being built in southwestern Virginia.

Circuit Judge Margaret Spencer ruled that Dominion Virginia Power's mercury emissions permit for the Wise County plant would have improperly allowed the utility to adjust the limit after the plant is already operating.

Spencer said the State Air Pollution Control Board gave Dominion too much flexibility in complying with the mercury discharge limit, which must be met "irrespective of cost or achievability."

A coalition of environmental groups has been fighting to block the power plant for years, arguing that emissions would harm air and water quality and contribute to global warming.

Factory closes after 300 kids sickened in China

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, Aug. 12, 2009

BEIJING—Authorities in northern China have shut down a smelter after it was found to have caused lead poisoning that sickened more than 300 children, state media reported on Wednesday.

The move appeared to be a rare victory for health advocates in China, where pollution concerns are often ignored and those who raise complaints face harassment.

Families who lived near the Dongling Lead and Zinc Smelting Co. in Shaanxi province began bringing in sick children to hospitals and clinics in July and blamed the factory, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

An investigation showed that lead from the factory had leaked into the soil, air and water source for 425 families residing near the factory in the town of Changqing, the report said.

Local officials say they plan to relocate all 581 households living within 500 meters (1,600 feet) of the factory within the next two years, the report said.

Calls to local government authorities rang unanswered Wednesday.

Factory accidents and chemical leaks are common in China and are often blamed on lax enforcement of environmental regulations and safety rules and poor worker training.

Lead poisoning, which most commonly occurs in children, can damage the nervous and reproductive system, cause high blood pressure, anemia, memory loss, and in extreme cases, cause victims to fall into comas and die.

China's waterways, especially its major rivers, are dangerously polluted after decades of rapid economic growth and poor enforcement of pollution controls.

China's incinerators loom as a global hazard

By Keith Bradsher, staff writer

N.Y. Times, Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2009

SHENZHEN, China – In this sprawling metropolis in southeastern China stand two hulking brown buildings erected by a private company, the Longgang trash incinerators. They can be smelled a mile away and pour out so much dark smoke and hazardous chemicals that hundreds of local residents recently staged an all-day sit-in, demanding that the incinerators be cleaner and that a planned third incinerator not be built nearby.

After surpassing the United States as the world's largest producer of household garbage, China has embarked on a vast program to build incinerators as landfills run out of space. But these incinerators have become a growing source of toxic emissions, from dioxin to mercury, that can damage the body's nervous system.

And these pollutants, particularly long-lasting substances like dioxin and mercury, are dangerous not only in China, a growing body of atmospheric research based on satellite observations suggests. They float on air currents across the Pacific to American shores.

Chinese incinerators can be better. At the other end of Shenzhen from Longgang, no smoke is visible from the towering smokestack of the Baoan incinerator, built by a company owned by the municipal government.

Government tests show that it emits virtually no dioxin and other pollutants.

But the Baoan incinerator cost 10 times as much as the Longgang incinerators, per ton of trash-burning capacity.

The difference between the Baoan and Longgang incinerators lies at the center of a growing controversy in China. Incinerators are being built to wildly different standards across the country and even across cities like Shenzhen. For years Chinese government regulators have discussed the need to impose tighter limits on emissions. But they have done nothing because of a bureaucratic turf war, a Chinese government official and Chinese incineration experts said.

The Chinese government is struggling to cope with the rapidly rising mountains of trash generated as the world's most populated country has raced from poverty to rampant consumerism. Beijing officials warned in June that all of the city's landfills would run out of space within five years.

The governments of several cities with especially affluent, well-educated citizens, including Beijing and Shanghai, are setting pollution standards as strict as Europe's. Despite those standards, protests against planned incinerators broke out this spring in Beijing and Shanghai as well as Shenzhen.

Increasingly outspoken residents in big cities are deeply distrustful that incinerators will be built and operated to international standards. "It's hard to say whether this standard will be reached — maybe the incinerator is designed to reach this benchmark, but how do we know it will be properly operated?" said Zhao Yong, a computer server engineer who has become a neighborhood activist in Beijing against plans for an incinerator there.

Yet far dirtier incinerators continue to be built in inland cities where residents have shown little awareness of pollution.

Studies at the University of Washington and the Argonne National Laboratory in Argonne, Ill., have estimated that a sixth of the mercury now falling on North American lakes comes from Asia, particularly China, mainly from coal-fired plants and smelters but also from incinerators. Pollution from incinerators also tends to be high in toxic metals like cadmium.

Incinerators play the most important role in emissions of dioxin. Little research has been done on dioxin crossing the Pacific. But analyses of similar chemicals have shown that they can travel very long distances.

A 2005 report from the World Bank warned that if China built incinerators rapidly and did not limit their emissions, worldwide atmospheric levels of dioxin could double. China has since slowed its construction of incinerators and limited their emissions somewhat, but the World Bank has yet to do a follow-up report.

Airborne dioxin is not the only problem from incinerators. The ash left over after combustion is laced with dioxin and other pollutants. Zhong Rigang, the chief engineer at the Baoan incinerator here, said that his operation sent its ash to a special landfill designed to cope with toxic waste. But an academic paper last year by Nie Yongfeng, a Tsinghua University professor and government adviser who sees a need for more incinerators, said that most municipal landfills for toxic waste lacked room for the ash, so the ash was dumped.

Trash incinerators have two advantages that have prompted Japan and much of Europe to embrace them: they occupy much less real estate than landfills, and the heat from burning trash can be used to generate electricity. The Baoan incinerator generates enough power to light 40,000 households.

And landfills have their own environmental hazards. Decay in landfills also releases large quantities of methane, a powerful global warming gas, said Robert McIlvaine, president of McIlvaine Company, an energy consulting firm that calculates the relative costs of addressing disparate environmental hazards. Methane from landfills is a far bigger problem in China than toxic pollutants from incinerators, particularly modern incinerators like those in Baoan, he said.

China's national regulations still allow incinerators to emit 10 times as much dioxin as incinerators in the European Union; American standards are similar to those in Europe. Tightening of China's national standards has been stuck for three years in a bureaucratic war between the environment ministry and the main economic planning agency, the National Development and Reform Commission, said a Beijing official who insisted on anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the subject publicly.

The agencies agree that tighter standards on dioxin emissions are needed. They disagree on whether the environment ministry should have the power to stop incinerator projects that do not meet tighter standards, the official said, adding that the planning agency wants to retain the power to decide which projects go ahead.

Yan Jianhua, the director of the solid waste treatment expert group in Zhejiang province, a center of incinerator equipment manufacturing in China, defended the industry's record on dioxin, saying that households that burn their trash outdoors emit far more dioxin.

"Open burning is a bigger problem according to our research," Professor Yan said, adding that what China really needs is better trash collection so that garbage can be disposed of more reliably.

Critics and admirers of incinerators alike call for more recycling and reduced use of packaging as ways to reduce the daily volume of municipal garbage. Even when not recycled, sorted trash is easier for incinerators to burn cleanly, because the temperature in the furnace can be adjusted more precisely to minimize the formation of dioxin.

Yet the Chinese public has shown little enthusiasm for recycling. As Mr. Zhong, the engineer at the Baoan incinerator, put it, "No one really cares."

Small countries need a helping hand

By JOHN C. BERSIA - McClatchy-Tribune News Service

In the Modesto Bee, Wednesday, Aug. 12, 2009

Too many of the world's small countries, those with populations of less than 1.5 million, are sinking fast - in more ways than one. The latest warnings come from the Pacific region. At a recent conference in Australia, it was reported that some members of the Pacific Islands Forum - a 16-state group dedicated to shaping collective responses to regional issues - were struggling with hefty budget deficits, along with level or declining growth, well before the recession. Now, their plight has worsened.

Last week, several members of the same group also rang the climate-change alarm. Advancing seas are eating away at their shores, damaging or killing crops, contaminating freshwater and forcing people to abandon their villages.

Those developments, which are not limited to the Pacific, point to a serious, urgent crisis. I believe we all know how the rich world should respond to the climate-change challenge, starting with the reduction of harmful emissions on a reasonably strict schedule. The affected states themselves also have a key role to play by taking steps to mitigate disaster. As for the economic challenge, the Pacific Islands Forum offered some helpful ideas. It recommended that small states in the region bolster the private sector's influence, improve inefficiencies in state-controlled enterprises, and reduce the expense businesses shoulder for regulatory and legal purposes. But there is something even more fundamental to consider: Do small states really have the means to operate successfully in the global economy? How are they coping with the international financial crisis? For insights, I turned to Tim Cullen, executive director of the Small Countries Financial Management Centre (<http://www.gov.im/treasury/scfmc/management-centre.xml>), a newly minted, Oxford University-affiliated program on the Isle of Man.

Cullen explains that small countries are much more vulnerable to external shocks. They have fewer alternatives if things go wrong in the areas in which they specialize. Also, small countries tend not to have very diversified economies. Thus, they may be quite dependent on, for example, fisheries or the financial sector. Another disadvantage is their remoteness. In addition, because of the sheer small size of their populations, they do not have a great depth of human capacity to run their economies.

Fortunately, Cullen says, there are large countries that have reason to be attentive to the plight of their tiny brethren. For instance, he points to Canada for its particular focus on the Caribbean. Similarly, Australia and New Zealand have an interest in the Pacific nations.

Beyond the moral imperative, Cullen points out a practical incentive for caring: Some small countries have become transit points for the illegal movement of money. If they have weak regulatory systems and lack the capacity to administer anti-money-laundering schemes and counter the financing of terrorism, they are naturally going to become targets for criminal and terrorist organizations. Finally, he echoed the climate-change dilemma, especially for tiny islands. In light of those challenges, Cullen says he is impressed at how relatively well many small countries do.

Cullen knows from experience what he is talking about; his own home, the Isle of Man - a self-governing British Crown dependency located in the Irish Sea - with a population of 80,000, is part of the small-states club. He admits the island has had the good fortune of solid institutions, including a parliament that has met continuously for more than 1,000 years, and a legal system based jointly on United Kingdom and Scandinavian sources. Even so, three decades ago, the Isle of Man faced a predicament. Most of its land was agricultural, yet that sector contributed minimally to the island's economy. Further complicating the economic outlook was that many

tourists discovered they could fly to Spain or other warm spots for about the same cost as an Isle of Man visit. Those circumstances prompted the island to diversify into new areas: financial services, film-making and ship registration. The result is a robust economy in the 21st century.

Now, Cullen says, the Isle of Man seeks to be part of the solution for other small countries' troubles. Along with Oxford University's Saïd Business School, the World Bank and other partners, it has embarked on an innovative education program. Each year, it gives officials who work in small-country finance ministries, central banks and financial regulatory bodies an opportunity for cost-free, intensive training with some of the best professors and practitioners in the world - specialists who would not ordinarily be available to them.

To small countries, such efforts can be a life-saver, enhancing their officials' skills and confidence to plan, negotiate and shape strategies in a rapidly changing, uncertain world.

[O.C. Register blog, Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2009:](#)

A man for all smog seasons

posted by Pat Brennan, green living, environment editor

Fighting smog really is a fight for Hank Wedaa, a scrappy one that's lasted decades. And California is taking notice.

The 85-year-old Yorba Linda resident — part politician, part air-quality activist, part technical expert — just received a kind of lifetime achievement award from the state Air Resources Board. It's called the Haagen-Smit award, named for the man who figured out how sunlight cooks tailpipe emissions into the ozone haze that threatens public health in the Los Angeles basin.

Wedaa, a former Yorba Linda city councilman and mayor, served for seven years on the board of the South Coast Air Quality Management District in the late 1980s and early 1990s, three as its chairman.

He's also served as chairman of the North American Clean Air Alliance for Zero Emission Vehicles and is a co-founder of Fuel Cells for Transportation. He was president of the California Hydrogen Business Council for six years.

But one of Wedaa's earliest experiences with Southern California smog came in 1949, when, fresh from graduate school in physics and chemistry, he visited a friend in Pasadena.

"A month later, I came back," Wedaa said. "When I came back, you know what had happened? A mountain had grown behind Pasadena."

The soupy air had, of course, obscured the mountain on his first visit. But Wedaa got a real taste of smog when he moved to Fullerton in 1958.

"The smog was terrible," he said. "It got worse and worse, because the Air Pollution Control District was not doing what they were supposed to be doing."

Since then, he said, improvements have been dramatic. "Now we have air that we can breathe, instead of eating."

Wedaa led some of the region's most important changes in air-quality regulations during his tenure on the smog board; his early experiences, he said, taught him an important lesson.

"I guess I dislike regulations as much as anybody does," he said. "We learned that you can't rely on people to clean it up themselves. They all had the opportunity to do it, and they didn't do that. That's why the AQMD was established."

Wedaa, who flew 30 missions over Europe as a bombardier during World War II, sat on the political hot seat in his years on the AQMD board. He helped force power plants to stop burning oil, instead requiring that they switch to natural gas — "still a dirty fuel, but a lot cleaner than is oil," he said.

One of his best-known achievements is the creation of the air district's RECLAIM program, an early version of cap and trade that allows industries to buy and sell smog credits under an ever-lowering dome of emission limits.

He says members of the Obama administration of a national cap-and-trade program are now looking at RECLAIM as a potential model.

Today, he says, the biggest challenges are fine particle pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as pollution that drifts across the Pacific from Asia and adds to the mix of bad air in Southern California.

And Wedaa is still at it. Lately, he's been promoting a system that can dramatically reduce nitrogen oxide emissions and particulates from power plants.

"I'm still quite active, still interested in seeing what we can do to improve our living in Orange County," he said.

Despite the nation's economic difficulties, he says supports the Obama administration's push toward climate change and energy legislation.

"Like many people, I don't know what the right answer is," Wedaa said. "He's doing something. Whether it turns out to be good or bad, we'll find out. (But) he's not sitting back and saying, 'Private industry will take care of it by itself.'"

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses new promises are made at the world wide climate change conference in Amsterdam. A draft of over 200 pages will be finalized as a treaty that pretends to reduce carbon emissions during the next decade. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Se reanuda conferencia climática mundial con nuevas promesas

Univision, Monday, August 10, 2009

AMSTERDAM (AP) - Los países adinerados no han ido lo suficientemente lejos para frenar las emisiones de gas de efecto invernadero, dijeron activistas el lunes, mientras delegados de 180 naciones reanudaban sus conversaciones hacia un pacto para controlar el cambio climático mundial.

En lo que será una reunión de cinco días en Bonn, Alemania, los negociadores empezaron a transformar un borrador de 200 páginas para crear un tratado que pretenda reducir las emisiones de carbono en el mundo durante la próxima década.

Las negociaciones se estancaron durante meses debido al reclamo de los países pobres para que grupos de países ricos se comprometieran a reducir las emisiones de gases que atrapan el calor antes de 2020. Los países adinerados, sin embargo, piden que todas las naciones hagan ese esfuerzo.

Las negociaciones, coordinadas por la ONU, tienen el objetivo de lograr un tratado que sustituya al Protocolo de Kioto de 1997. Ese documento ordenó el establecimiento de límites en las emisiones de gases antes de 2012 en 37 países ricos, pero no exigió demandas en otras naciones.

Los objetivos a cumplir en 2020 serán adoptados en diciembre durante una conferencia en Copenhage, Dinamarca. El pacto probablemente incluirá financiación para que los países pobres se adapten a las nuevas medidas para frenar el cambio climático y reduzcan sus emisiones sin afectar sustancialmente el crecimiento de su economía.

El lunes, Nueva Zelanda fue el país más reciente en anunciar su objetivo para 2020 y prometió reducir los gases de efecto invernadero de un 10 a un 20% respecto a los niveles de 1990.

El grupo medioambiental WWF criticó el objetivo, diciendo que es poco ambicioso, y acusó al gobierno de someterse a los conglomerados industriales que habían presentado "visiones apocalípticas" para la economía del país si éste intentaba reducir en mayor cantidad las emisiones de combustibles fósiles.

"Los países industrializados no están cumpliendo con los objetivos y necesitan volver a sus etapas iniciales", dijo Kim Carstensen, directora de la Iniciativa Global para el Clima de WWF.

La reunión de Bonn es la última de seis rondas de negociaciones planeadas este año, además de varias cumbres realizadas por los países que emiten más gases de efecto invernadero.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a fire evacuates 14 ranches in Santa Barbara County.](#)

Un incendio obliga a evacuar 14 ranchos en California

HOY, Wednesday, August 12, 2009

Las autoridades ordenaron ayer la evacuación de 14 ranchos en el condado de Santa Bárbara, en el sur de California (EE.UU.), debido a un incendio que arde sin control y ha calcinado más de ocho hectáreas de monte.

El fuego se originó el pasado sábado en una zona despoblada y de difícil acceso de Los Padres National Forest, lo que está dificultando las tareas de extinción en las que participan un millar de bomberos, 12 helicópteros y decenas de vehículos, detalló un portavoz del Servicio Forestal contra Incendios a periodistas.

El último informe oficial indicó que únicamente un 10 por ciento del frente de llamas se encuentra bajo control.

Los residentes del área se dedican en gran parte a la ganadería y se han visto obligados a trasladar sus reses por motivos de seguridad.

Parte del terreno afectado por el incendio, en su mayoría matorral, no ardía desde 1992.