China cracks down on ‘excessive packaging’

CHINA is the only country that has imposed legislation to control excessive packaging.

These sustainable packaging regulations, introduced last year, are aimed at reducing the amount of packaging material used, cutting the volume of discarded packaging that ends up in municipal landfills, and acting as a consumer protection measure to prohibit deceptive retail packaging.

As the first of its kind, these packaging regulations will be the focus of a round-table conference – understanding China’s legislative approach to excessive packaging reduction – during LuxePack Shanghai on March 29.

China’s packaging industry is growing by 14% annually and contributes 2.4% to the national GDP. In 2010, China’s retail sales grew by 18.4%.

Such rapid growth doesn’t come without a cost. According to a recent report from the China Science Centre of the International Eurasian Academy of Sciences, the country accounts for 30.6% of the world’s household waste, producing more than 152-million tons annually. In recent years, the volume of discarded packaging has been increasing by 8 to 10% annually.

The treatment of household waste has become a serious financial liability for city administrators: Beijing’s population of 20-million produces nearly 20 000 tons of waste every day, overburdening its 23 municipal waste treatment plants. To cope with this waste mountain the city authorities plan to build an additional 17 treatment plants by 2015, at a cost of US$1.15-billion.

Beijing’s landfills now occupy around 1 300 hectares of land and this is growing by more than 33 hectares annually – within three years the city’s landfill sites will be completely full.

Initially these regulations, covering beverage, cosmetics and selected food and bakery product packaging limit the number of packaging layers permitted (three); restrict the permitted headspace (void-space) volume; and specify a maximum ratio between the cost of the packaging and the retail selling price.

For more information visit www.packwebasia.com

Oz rules degradable bag claims misleading

ACCORDING to PlasticsNews.com an Australian plastic bag manufacturer has been penalised for falsely claiming its high density polyethylene (HDPE) shopping bags are biodegradable.

In January, an Australian court declared an Adelaide-based packaging company, Nupak Australia, engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct and making false representations about its Goody-branded HDPE bags.

Australia’s competition watchdog, the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), brought claims against Nupak in July 2010, and is also taking the supplier of the biodegradable chemical additive used to manufacture the bags, Goody Environment, to court.

Since May 2009, Nupak claimed its Goody-branded bags were biodegradable and compostable. The ACCC asserts otherwise, insisting the bags do not biodegrade or disintegrate in accordance with Australian Waste Standard criteria. It also insists the resin contains molybdenum additive in amounts exceeding the maximum concentration prescribed by the standard.

The ACCC maintains that as the bags do not comply with the waste standard, they also do not comply with requirements of South Australia’s Plastic Shopping Bags (Waste Avoidance) Act 2008.

South Australia was the first to ban HDPE bags in May 2009, and the Act prohibits retailers from selling or giving away plastic carry bags less than 35μm thick.