

elastomers can reduce compound cost and improve performance where a balance of flexibility, impact strength and transparency is required.

In addition to polymer modification applications, the new grades can be used as interfacing layers with PE and PP structures, and are said to be ideal for use as a sealing layer in coextruded structures. Typical applications include calendered or extruded sheet/profiles, extrusion coating, nonwovens and injection or blow moulded goods. 'The addition of these grades to the Vistamaxx elastomer portfolio further increases the ability of compounders and converters to develop innovative solutions and tailor properties to better meet the needs of many applications', says Lynell Maenza, specialty elastomers Asia Pacific market manager, ExxonMobil Chemical.

In other recent company news, groundbreaking has taken place for ExxonMobil's Technology Centre in Shanghai, China. The company says the centre represents an important part of its continued business growth in China and will enhance the delivery of innovative solutions to customers in the region. The new 27 000 m² facility will be built and operated by ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Research & Development Co Ltd. The initial investment in the centre and related equipment is US\$70 million. The facility will house laboratories and product demonstration facilities, providing applications technical service and a range of application development capabilities for ExxonMobil's polymer products and plasticizers. Initial employment will be approximately 200 people. The facility is expected to be operational in 2010.

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Nanoclay additive extends shelf life for packaged food

NanoBioMatters Industries (NBM), a Spanish technology firm, has commercialized a nanoclay-based additive that is claimed to extend the shelf life of packaged foods. Marketed under the NanoBioTer[®] trade name, the new product can enhance barrier properties while having minimal impact on processing, optical performance and cost, the firm says.

The company also offers a second product, NanoBioTer Plus, which is said to act as a natural anti-

microbial to prevent the growth of bacteria, mould and fungi on protected surfaces. NBM's products are purified and modified nanoclay additives for applications in polymers, resins and bioplastics. They are available in both powder and resin masterbatch form.

Founded in 2004 by Dr Jose Maria Lagaron to combine technologies from the fields of nanotechnology, plastics reinforcement and bio-based materials, NBM operates a 2500 tonnes/year (5.5 million lbs) capacity plant in Valencia and is completing a second facility there with annual capacity of some 4000 tonnes (9 million lbs).

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Roquette receives sustainability prize for 'natural' plasticizer

French starch and derivatives specialist Roquette has been awarded the 2009 Pierre Potier prize for the launch of POLYSORB[®] ID 37, a new high-performance plasticizer made from natural products. Created in 2006 on the initiative of France's Ministry for the Economy, Finance and Industry, this annual chemical industry prize rewards those who commit to innovation for sustainable development.

POLYSORB ID 37 is composed of isosorbide diesters produced from fatty acids of vegetable origin and isosorbide obtained by simple modification (dehydration) of a derivative of glucose, sorbitol. It is therefore entirely produced from renewable (bio-based) natural products, Roquette says. According to the company, isosorbide diesters have excellent plasticizing properties for PVC and represent a non-toxic and biodegradable alternative to the phthalates conventionally used for the manufacture of flexible PVC. Compared to other phthalate-free plasticizers (adipates, acetylated monoglycerides, citrates) POLYSORB ID 37 is claimed to be particularly versatile, with both excellent compatibility with PVC and a very low volatility.

As the first step towards the industrialization of isosorbide diesters, Roquette has recently obtained European authorization to produce significant volumes. The company currently operates a demonstration unit at Lestrem in France for the production of POLYSORB ID 37. Launched in June 2008, the unit has a capacity of more than 100 tonnes per annum.