



DMITRY KONOV'S INTERVIEW TO SNOB MAGAZINE

Dmitry Konov talks about the importance of responsible use of plastic and the type of professionals that Russia is currently lacking.

What is your company doing to protect the environment? To what extent are these measures aligned with global standards? What is the outlook?

Responsible consumption and production are something we view as SIBUR's key priorities and the cornerstone of building a circular economy within our company.

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The first component here is the processing of associated petroleum gas (APG – Ed.). While producers used to simply flare it as early as the beginning of the 1990s, now it is a common type of feedstock for polymers such as plastics and rubbers. SIBUR is the largest company that recycles oil and gas waste in Russia. Last year alone, we processed 22.3 bcm of APG, helping to prevent over 72 mt of greenhouse gas emissions, which is equivalent to a year's worth of GHG created by an average-sized European nation. Another aspect is our plastics production. In terms of environmental friendliness, it beats other seemingly green materials, such as glass, metal, or concrete, which are actually way more energy and CO₂ intensive.



SiburTyumenGaz, Vyngapurovsky GPP.

WITH AN EVER-GROWING GLOBAL POPULATION AND URBANISATION, PLASTICS ARE POSITIONED TO CONTINUE THEIR EXPANSION IN PACKAGING, CONSTRUCTION, AND HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS.

Our plastics are used in a variety of industries, from healthcare to aviation. There are a number of environmental issues associated with plastic waste, mainly packaging. We already have the expertise in recycling, but waste collection is still a barrier. However, it is our belief that the answer to environmental challenges is not in abandoning the use of plastic. This kind of policy would put even more strain on the environment as a result of CO₂ emissions. Compared to plastics, production of other materials is associated with larger amounts of carbon dioxide and requires more energy. This makes for a double whammy as CO₂ emissions come from both production itself and generation of additional energy required to power the process. There will also be other implications for the environment, such as air emissions. All this makes us believe that instead of banning plastics we need to focus on more sustainable consumption and promoting waste sorting and recycling.

With an ever-growing global population and urbanisation, plastics are positioned to continue their expansion in packaging, construction, and household chemicals. We aim to think ahead and are currently looking into ways to invest in the recycling of plastic packaging. One such project showcased at the Eastern Economic Forum is to incorporate PET flakes from used packaging into the production process for primary PET at our POLIEF facility in the Republic of Bashkortostan. We plan to produce pellets containing primary and secondary polymers as a way to increase our total PET capacities. At the same time, we are looking into some promising technologies to have plastic waste recycled at our SIBUR PolyLab R&D hub.



POLIEF expects to use PET flakes as feedstock for primary PET production.

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On the sidelines of the forum, Deputy Head of the Federal Antimonopoly Service Anatoly Golomolzin said that you sold your Togliatti-based assets to Tatneft. What assets are those, and what is the rationale behind the decision?

This is no secret – the deal was publicly announced in early September and will be closed until the end of the year. We are selling synthetic rubbers and other chemical products facilities to be better aligned with our business growth priorities, and I need to say that these go beyond the basic polymers segment. On top of that, we launched butyl rubber production in India, helping to keep butyl rubber in our portfolio through this new facility. We are expanding production in Voronezh, using among other things butadiene as feedstock, and can now benefit from more efficient rubber capacities. In turn, Tatneft was eager to add new assets to its feedstock base for tyre production.

SIBUR has an agreement with the Siberian State University of Science and Technology to provide training to undergraduates, and the enrolment process is already underway. What do you think are the professional areas that Russia currently has problems with? And how competitive are the new talent coming out of Russian universities?

Indeed, Russia is currently lacking versatile professionals trained to work at state-of-the-art production facilities. This is precisely why we launched our Chemical Engineering course: in addition to building competencies in new materials, modern chemical technologies and nanotech, it is expected to help chemistry students master the skills of project management and digital technologies in production and business processes. With that expertise under their belts, students will be perfectly positioned to compete globally.



Tobolsk airport, where SIBUR is building a new runway.

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We also have agreements with universities other than the Siberian State University of Science and Technology. One example is the Amur State University, which has targeted programmes for power industry and chemical technology students. SIBUR's facilities have already hired 30 graduates. Also, we have launched a number of initially cross-functional programmes with the Far Eastern Federal University, namely those for chemists and contract management professionals.

Media reports say that SIBUR is constructing a new runway at the airport of Tobolsk to have it commissioned before the end of the year. What were the project costs and what other similar infrastructure projects are you planning to implement in Russian regions?

Runway as the first stage of the airport construction is indeed expected to be completed this year. Commissioning is slated for next year and will coincide with the construction of a terminal building with a capacity of up to 300 passengers per hour. We cannot announce our total costs as the amount of our investments in the facility is yet to be finalised.

Any other infrastructure projects will be announced in due course. Right now, we are focused on improving the connectivity to Eurasia, with the Tobolsk airport opening up new opportunities for the business community, tourism, and local residents.

Interview by Sergey Tsekhmistrenko

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