

Clarifier-Colorant Combo gets “Thumbs Up” from Thumbs Up

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Leading British injection moulder Thumbs Up (Bury), Ltd has launched a new line of food and domestic storage containers in coloured polypropylene random copolymer compounds that provide unparalleled clarity. The compounds contain Milliken’s ground-breaking Millad NX8000™ clarifying agent, used in combination with the company’s ClearTint® polymeric dyes.

Millad NX8000 Clarifying Agent improves clarity and gloss in polypropylene (PP) applications to levels comparable with “glass clear” polymers such as PET, polycarbonate and acrylics and even glass itself. It is equally applicable in products made by injection moulding, extrusion-blow moulding and injection-blow moulding. The innovative additive has also been demonstrated to help yield important energy savings and cycle time reductions for processors, thanks to a solubility in PP that is much higher than conventional clarifiers. This allows for a significant reduction in processing temperatures - around 30° C in some cases - without having a negative effect on clarity.

“The tuneable property of Millad NX8000 Clarifying Agent in PP random copolymer enables a wide spectrum of solutions ranging from what we term Enhanced Quality, or EQ, through to Ultimate Clarity – UC,” says Sami T.K Palanisami, Milliken’s Market Manager for Plastic Additives for Europe and the Middle East. “While UC indicates a step change in clarity and gloss to levels comparable with ‘glass clear’ polymers, EQ gives significant improvements in transparency and aesthetics together with a wider processing window and improved productivity. The achievements at Thumbs Up help demonstrate the potential of using Enhanced Quality resins containing Millad NX8000 clarifying agent.”

Thumbs Up produces several ranges of storage containers as well as other house and gardenwares. CEO John McGuinness says Thumbs Up has put considerable effort in recent years, together with different suppliers of polypropylene, to enable it to offer its major retailing clients high quality food containers and domestic storage products.

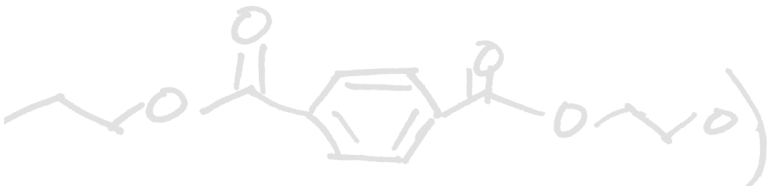
One of Thumbs Up’s prime requirements has always been the clarity of the finished product which is being achieved by working with Milliken and the major resin producers. But it was the trials using an innovative range of random copolymers formulated with Millad NX8000 clarifying agent at Enhanced Quality that, he says, “gave us not only further enhancements in clarity, but also production cost savings.”

Explaining Thumbs Up’s decision to use ClearTint dye together with Millad NX8000 clarifying agent, John McGuinness says: “Our own consumer research and discussions with major retailers related to our ‘in mould’ decoration process indicated that we needed to look at tints that would not negatively affect the advantages of the new clarified material, but would help further increase the consumer appeal of the containers.”

ClearTint polymeric dyes are the perfect complement to Millad NX8000 clarifying agents. Unlike more conventional dyes, they are non-extractable and suitable for food contact applications. Nor do they affect part shrinkage, which can be a problem with pigments often used in polyolefins.

John McGuinness says the positive reaction from his potential customers when they saw prototype containers meant that choosing the new PP/Millad NX8000 Clarifying Agent/ClearTint Polymeric Dye combination was a simple process. The company has since begun production of containers ranging from 0.6 to 150 liters in a variety of colours for one major retailer. Strong interest from others is likely to be turned into hard orders for the domestic storage boxes and towers in the next few months.

McGuinness concludes: “I am certain that our cooperation with Milliken will help create a new market for us and enable the major retailers to see the commercial advantages that come with offering consumer design-led merchandise incorporating the latest colour trends. We envisage that demand for random-copolymer containing Millad NX8000 clarifying agent coupled with the Milliken ClearTint dye colours will grow substantially in the next twelve months.”



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