Business Week

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Lanxess sales increase 7.4% in Q1

31 May 2005

German specialty chemical company, Lanxess AG, has reported success in the first quarter of 2005. Sales advanced by 7.4% to €1,729 million compared with €1,610 million in the same period last year. The company attributed this rise to an increase in business in its Performance Rubber and Chemical Intermediates segments. Group net income for the first quarter came to €70 million, a strong improvement compared with the same period of 2004 (€26 million).

"We have had a satisfactory start to 2005," commented Lanxess CEO Axel Heitmann, "but as the year progresses we need to achieve further substantial improvements in earnings, and above all intensify our restructuring, to make Lanxess globally competitive for the long term."

On the status of the negotiations with the employee representatives concerning the restructuring of the loss-making Styrenic Resins and Fine Chemicals units and the possible elimination of up to 1,200 jobs, Heitmann said: "Intensive discussions are currently ongoing. I still anticipate that we can bring them to a conclusion this quarter."

Sales in the EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa) region, excluding Germany, rose by 4.7% to €640 million; sales in Germany rose 9.2% to €390 million; sales in the Americas region increased by a substantial 8.7% to €449 million; and sales in the Asia Pacific region grew by 9.2% to €250 million.

Sales in the Performance Chemicals segment were on a par with the prior year, at €478 million, a slight decline in volumes being offset by price increases. The Textile Processing Chemicals business unit reported lower sales, especially in Europe and the Americas.

The North Face opens Stockholm store

31 May 2005

The North Face opened its first store in Sweden, its sixth in Europe, on May 31, 2005 in Stockholm. Opened in partnership with Outside Scandinavia AB, the 310m2 retail store is situated on the corner of two of Stockholm's most important commercial streets.

"The Stockholm store will carry the complete line of The North Face authentic, technologically advanced apparel, footwear and equipment," noted Patrik Frisk, sales director The North Face, EMEA (Europe, the Middle East, and Africa).

Intex receives encouraging exhibitor response

31 May 2005

Manufacturers and suppliers of apparel fabrics and accessories from Asia and Europe, including Taiwan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Turkey, Egypt, India, Italy and France, will showcase their latest collections at Intex 2005 to be held October 10-12 in Mumbai, India.

Organisers of the fair, in association with the Clothing Manufacturers' Association of India (CMAI), not only hope to showcase the latest in Indian products at the event but also hope that India will be able to attract suppliers as the garment manufacturing sector that is continuing to expand needs a

steady supply of fabrics and accessories that are currently not available in the country such as performance fabrics, coated fabrics, high-end dyed yarns, and functional fabrics.

Imports of apparel fabrics and accessories into India are expected to rise exponentially even as the garment exports industry is setting up new facilities to meet the export target of US$25 billion by the year 2010. Indian garment exporters and domestic brands have expressed the need for a wide variety of functional and specialty fabrics that are not readily available in the country.

“Our vast and growing domestic and export markets require us to look for new suppliers of innovative fabrics and accessories,” said Premal Udani, president, of CMAI.

Johnson Outdoors receives $15.9 million military tent order

31 May 2005

Outdoor recreational products company, Johnson Outdoors Inc. maker of Eureka tents has been awarded a $15.9 million urgent need military tent order. The government order calls for delivery of 2,510 modular general purpose tent systems (MGPTS) over the next eight months.

The MGPTS, first used by US troops in 1999, resulted from a joint innovation effort by the US military and Johnson Outdoors targeted at providing superior all-weather tent protection. Johnson Outdoors is one of only two US manufacturers qualified to produce the MGPTS. The company's Outdoor Equipment business, headquartered in Binghamton, New York, is preparing to begin production against the order as soon as possible.

"Obviously, we are very pleased to have received this order; which will slow the anticipated decline of military tent sales this year. Our primary focus continues to be on achieving greater balance in the performance of all segments of the Outdoor Equipment portfolio," said Helen Johnson-Leipold, chairman and CEO, Johnson Outdoors Inc.

Bayer introduces polyurethane for coating films

31 May 2005

Bayer MaterialScience AG has launched Desmopan DP 6580A MVT (Moisture Vapour Transmission), a new thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU) developed by for the production of films used to coat fabrics. The material’s main feature is said to be its unusually high water vapour permeability which, in the case of a 15 micrometre thick film, amounts to 5,400 grams per square metre per day at 38°C and 90% relative humidity according to DIN Standard 53122.

"This high breathability opens up completely new possibilities for coating sports and leisurewear, particularly when using membrane technology," says Jens Ufermann, head of the Coatings and Films Segment in the TPU Business Unit of Bayer MaterialScience.

The polyether-based TPU can be extruded to produce blown and flat films that are compatible with the adhesives commonly used to bond textiles to films, and are also suitable for lamination. They additionally display very good mechanical strength for films of this type.

Global Sources to launch China Sourcing Fair: Fashion Accessories in April ‘06

31 May 2005

The inaugural China Sourcing Fair: Fashion Accessories will be held from April 15-8, 2006 at the new AsiaWorld-Expo venue in Hong Kong, according to organisers Global Sources Ltd. The fair will take place twice a year in the spring and autumn buying seasons and allow Asian suppliers of hats, scarves, umbrellas, sunglasses, handbags, casual footwear and other fashion accessories to promote and sell their products to buyers from around the world.

Global Sources chairman and chief executive officer, Merle A. Hinrichs, said: "Our research shows China exported more than US$200 million worth of school and

casual backpacks to the US alone in 2004. China also has more than 4,000 manufacturers of casual footwear, with only about 400 presently exporting directly. The country accounted for 60% of world's casual footwear output in October 2004. The China Sourcing Fair: Fashion Accessories will support the needs of our large and well-established buyer and supplier communities in this sector."

Puma announces collaboration with Alexander McQueen

31 May 2005

Puma will collaborate with fashion designer, Alexander McQueen, in the production of a new line of men's and women's footwear expected to be launched in spring 2006. Known for his innovative approach to fashion, Alexander McQueen is an established luxury brand with a strong international following.

CEO and chairman of Puma AG, Jochen Zeitz commented: "The collaboration will connect Puma with the most front-end fashion innovators and take the concept of sport-fashion to the next level. Known for his ability to juxtapose influences, the fusing of sport and fashion was Alexander McQueen's challenge, his response is an unexpected collection that is based on the union of tradition and technology."

The collection will be unveiled during women's fashion week in London in September 2005 and will be available at select high-end retailers globally in spring 2006.

Tropi-Ties to take its Signature Swimwear Line to shops

31 May 2005

Online swimwear retailer Tropi-Ties Swimwear is to present its signature collection of swimwear this summer at the upcoming Magic apparel show in Las Vegas on August 29. So far the line has only been available to consumers through Tropi-Ties' online catalogue but from this year retailers will also carry its products.

Among the more traditional, bikini styles, the company has created a new "blousette" bikini top similar to a tankini top but cut away in the front and with a draping back. The edges are ruffled and trimmed of in French, button, details.
Tropi-Ties, set up in 1996, offers bikinis, swimwear and beach clothing via its online shopping venue. In 2002, Tropi-Ties unveiled its Signature Collection swimwear line.

Bilateral trade between China-Latvia rise to 53.1%

31 May 2005

Bilateral trade between China and Latvia has risen by 53.1% on a year-on-year basis in 2004, amounting to $199 million, of which exports to Latvia were $179 billion and imports $19.81 million, up by 61.8% and 3.2% respectively, according to Chinese Customs statistics and China Institute for Reform and Development.

Statistics from Latvia showed that Chinas exports in 2004 increased to $88.6 million from $67.5 million in 2003 with a growth rate of 31.3%. China's imports from Latvia were down by a big margin, reaching $10.6 million in 2004, decreasing by 36.6% on a year-on-year basis. Main exports of China to Latvia were machinery, textile and garments, footwear and caps. Main imports from Latvia were IT, aeronautical material, timber and metal and mineral products.

According to statistics of Chinas Customs, in the first quarter in 2005, imports and exports between China and Latvia amounted to $47.77 million. Exports were $46.04 million, up by 16.3% compared with the same period of last year. Imports were $1.73 million, down by 85.3%.

NSGA appoints two officers

01 June 2005

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) Board of Directors has elected two officers, whose terms will run to January 31, 2006.

A.J. Blanchard has been elected executive vice president – Hardgoods of Academy Sports & Outdoors in Katy, Texas, will serve as chairman-elect. He has held the dual-position of treasurer and chairman-elect since January. Bruce Ullery, president of MC Sports, Grand Rapids, Mich., was elected treasurer.

Chairman of the Board Ron Kruse will continue to serve in that capacity through January 31, 2006, after which Blanchard will assume the chairman's responsibilities, and Ullery will become treasurer/chairman-elect. Kruse will remain on the Board as past chairman.

"This was necessitated by a vacancy created by resignation earlier this year," said NSGA president & CEO Jim Faltinek.

Oakley releases 512 MB version of Thump digital eyewear

02 June 2005

Oakley, Inc. has added a 512MB version to its Oakley Thump line of digital music eyewear and a new frame and lens colour combination for the 256MB model. The upgraded version effectively doubles the amount of available memory ensuring storage for up to 120 songs, or a combination of music and data.

Oakley Thump features a fully integrated audio system, optimised for acoustically precise playback of digitally compressed files including MP3, WMA and WAV file formats.

Oakley produces sunglasses and an expanding line of performance apparel and accessories, footwear, prescription eyewear, electronics and watches to consumers in more than 100 countries.

Saucony agrees to Stride Rite takeover

02 June 2005

Saucony, Inc., a global supplier of performance athletic footwear, casual footwear, apparel, and accessories, has entered into a definitive agreement with The Stride Rite Corporation under which Stride Rite has agreed to acquire Saucony.

Stride Rite will pay $23 in cash for each share of Class A and Class B common stock of Saucony, representing a 19% premium to $19.32, the average of the Class A and Class B common stock closing prices on June 1, 2005, and a 17% premium to $19.60, which is the average of the last four weeks' closing prices of Saucony's Class A and Class B common shares. The transaction is expected to close in the summer of 2005.

Saucony president and CEO John Fisher said: "The announcement of the merger agreement between Saucony and Stride Rite is the culmination of our strategic alternative review process announced last August. We believe that this transaction maximises value for Saucony shareholders. In addition, we are convinced that Saucony has found the correct acquirer to expand our market presence and accelerate the growth of our businesses. We believe that Stride Rite's and Saucony's complementary strengths will provide a stronger platform for growth and profitability. We thank our shareholders for their patience during our review process and look forward with enthusiasm to becoming part of the Stride Rite family."

Saucony designs, develops and markets performance-oriented athletic footwear, athletic apparel and casual leather footwear. Its brands include Saucony, Saucony "Originals", Hind brand and Spot-bilt.

Indian Apparel Manufacturers, US importers gather in New York

02 June 2005

Hundreds of Indian apparel manufacturers and US importers are set to meet at the second annual Sourcing Apparel-India Expo in New York City June 8- 9, 2005. The expo will offer a wide range of manufacturer exhibits as well as seminars on issues affecting US-India textile and apparel trade. The event is being co-sponsored by international trade law firm Sandler, Travis, & Rosenberg, P.A. and India's Apparel

Export Promotion Council (AEPC), an agency affiliated with the Indian government's Ministry of Textiles.

"The Sourcing Apparel-India Expo is the largest gathering of India apparel manufacturers in the United States," said Thomas Travis, managing partner of ST&R. "Among the exhibitors will be the leading Indian apparel products exporters. The event provides a unique opportunity for US apparel importers to meet personally with India's top full package, private label and CMT manufacturers and view the latest designs in men's, women's and children's clothing all under one roof."

US Secretary of Commerce urges China to speed progress on trade Issues

03 June 2005

In a speech given on June 1, before the American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing, US Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez, warned that the government of China must speed progress on issues driving trade relations with the United States or risk an outbreak of protectionism that will hurt both countries' economies.

"If Americans don't consider our terms of trade to be fair, they will not support trade," Gutierrez said in the speech. "Those of us who favour economic engagement want to work with the Chinese leadership, but we need more than commitments. We need results."

Gutierrez said the absence of results in areas such as China's protection of intellectual property rights, efforts to increase regulatory transparency, and resolution of structural issues such as subsidies for state-owned enterprises "empowers those within the US political system who are pushing an American retreat from the global economy."

Stressing that the Bush administration opposes increased tariffs and other restrictive measures as a means of resolving trade friction, Gutierrez called for a "spirit of partnership" and cooperation. “Unless the US and China show results, everything we have worked for could be in jeopardy because opponents of free trade may get their way," he said.

Gutierrez said the economic relationship between the United States and China is important to the whole world because the two countries lead the world in trade and business growth. In order to set a standard as true leaders, he said, the United States and China must be "role models" and set an example.

Infineon transfers ownership of its wearable electronics activities

03 June 2005

Within the framework of a management buy out (MBO), Germany’s Infineon Technologies AG has turned its activities in the area of wearable electronics over to the company Interactive Wear AG iG of Wessling, Germany.

Infineon conducted research on the integration of electronic functions into textiles and developed this technology to the point that it is ready for the market.

Nevertheless, it has discontinued these activities as part of its strategic restructuring and concentration on its core business. As part of this MBO, which has now been completed, the rights to Intellectual Property, such as patents and licenses, now belong to Interactive Wear, along with developmental hardware and software and the existing customer base, as well as the parts inventory and the finished wearable electronics products.

Andreas Roepert, Interactive Wear's CEO, comments: "We are delighted that the acquisition of Infineon's wearable electronics activities went so smoothly. We will now concentrate our consulting, development, production and sales efforts fully on one business - wearable electronics. Thanks to the technological head start and network of partners that we acquired from Infineon, and to the extremely positive market appraisal from various analysts who anticipate a market volume of up to $1 billion for

technical textiles in 2008, we see excellent market opportunities and developmental potential for our company."

The company's first official appearance will take place from June 7 - 9, 2005 at “Avantex” 2005.

Admet launches eP digital controller for tabletop testing machines

03 June 2005

Admet Inc., a US manufacturer of integrated materials testing systems, has launched a new digital controller with PWM motor drive for use on new or existing table top tension, compression and torsion testing equipment.

The new eP Digital Controller features force and position inputs, a 24 key tactile keypad and a four-line LCD with 5/16" high, easy-to-read digits. Key to the design is an integrated PWM motor drive that will control brushed motors requiring up to 500W of power. The eP can be programmed to calculate maximum force, minimum force, average force, force at break, extension at break, extension at force, force at extension and stiffness. Calculated results and XY data can be downloaded to a computer via an RS232 serial port for further review and reporting. The eP is powered by a 32-bit microprocessor, which provides accurate closed-loop control of test speed. Force accuracy exceeds ASTM E4 requirements and in general exceeds 0.5% of reading.

"The eP Digital Controller is ideal for testing films, adhesives, textiles, polymers and for performing product tests,” commented Richard Gedney, founder and president of Admet.

Finish Line reports increased sales

03 June 2005

US athletic specialty retailer The Finish Line, Inc. has reported net sales of $291,226,000 for the 13 weeks ended May 28, 2005, an increase of 13% over net sales of $257,966,000 for the first quarter of last year. Comparable store net sales for Q1 increased 2% on top of a 14% increase reported for the comparable 13-week period last year.

Mr. Alan H. Cohen, chairman and CEO, stated: "We are pleased to report our tenth consecutive quarterly comparable store sales gain. The 2% gain for the quarter was on top of a combined two-year comparable increase of 28%. Sales were lead by premium product including new technologies and marquee shoes from our brand partners and resulted in an 8% increase in the average selling price of footwear and improved product margins for the quarter.”

The Finish Line offers footwear, apparel and accessories for men, women and children in its 625 Finish Line stores in 46 states of the USA.

Techtextil 2005 sets new exhibitor record

03 June 2005

'Focusing on Innovation' is the motto under which the record 1,050 exhibitors from 49 countries will come together at Techtextil 2005, International Trade Fair for Technical Textiles and Nonwovens that is to take place June 6-8 in Frankfurt, Germany. The focus of the event will be on the potential applications for technical textiles and nonwovens. For the first time, this year's fair will be supplemented by Avantex, International Forum for Innovative Apparel Textiles, which will take place parallel to Techtextil.

"We have set a new exhibitor record for the 11th Techtextil", announced Michael Jänecke, Techtextil and Avantex event manager, Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH. "There are 174 or 20% more exhibitors than at the last event in 2003 and this shows the significance that technical textiles have come to hold throughout the world.”

Pacific Sunwear reports 11.3% increase in May sales

03 June 2005

Specialty retailer of apparel, accessories and footwear Pacific Sunwear of California, Inc. has reported that total sales for the four

weeks of fiscal May ending May 28, 2005 were $80.7 million, an increase of 11.3% over total sales of $72.5 million during the same period last year. Total company same store sales increased 0.4% during the same period.

Total sales for the first 17 weeks of fiscal 2005 were $360.6 million, an increase of 13.4% over total sales of $318.0 million during the same period last year. Total company same store sales increased 2.4% during the same period.

Okabashi launches women's shoes with ergonomic support

04 June 2005

Okabashi, a US manufacturer of comfort shoes, has launched a new line of women's sandals based upon reflexology that stimulates the nerve endings of the feet, enhancing blood flow to vital organs in the body.

Okabashi's Microplast technology has long been a source of relief for people who suffer from common pain associated with walking or standing. Having sold over 100 million pairs of shoes, Okabashi has now launched a new line of fashion-oriented women's sandals and clogs called Oka b.

Like Okabashi shoes, Oka b. sandals and clogs have ergonomic arch supports and utilise Okabashi's Microplast massage beads, making the shoes a comfortable fashion statement. With attractive adornments, a wide range of colours, and popular styles, these shoes are both highly desirable and easy to wear.

According to the principles of reflexology, walking on natural terrain stimulates pressure points in the soles of the feet, which are connected to different parts of the body and promote physiological well being. "Since people do not go barefoot and spend most of their days walking or standing on hard, inflexible surfaces," said Naomi Wakatake, director of product development. "We've developed the Microplast material to mimic what it is like to walk on earth."