

Environment

Green? It's only fair!

Dr Alan Deidun greens up the Malta Trade Fair.

The Malta Trade Fair is an annual appointment much cherished by exhibitors and consumers alike since it acts as a showcase of some of the best ware to be purchased on the islands. Being attended by thousands of Maltese, the event is also a gilt-edged opportunity to implement pro-environment measures. These might include the large-scale adoption of waste separation measures within the premises of the Trade Fair and the judicious disposal of the staggering quantities of packaging waste generated on site. A competition whereby the most environmentally-conscious exhibitor is earmarked could well be in order. Perhaps a tad more ambitious and esoteric a suggestion could be the adoption of carbon offsetting initiatives by the fair organisers. These initiatives could include the planting of a number of indigenous trees equivalent to the carbon dioxide emitted by cars visiting the fair and to offset the amount of cardboard utilised on the fair's premises.

Green Dot Malta Limited (formerly known as GreenPak Limited) operates the GreenPak waste management compliance scheme and is currently setting up a WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) compliance scheme. Established in 2004, GreenPak is fully authorised to run a compliance scheme across Malta and Gozo for the recovery of packaging waste in response to

the EU Packaging Directive, which directive aims to tackle the steadily increasing waste problems all across Europe.

All companies whose activities lead to the generation of packaging waste in Malta have an obligation to recover such packaging. By joining the GreenPak Compliance Scheme, companies are able to meet this obligation. The GreenPak Compliance Scheme is in fact the only registered Compliance Scheme in Malta.

The grapevine has it that a few visionary exhibitors are planning to embark on a milestone initiative at the next edition of the Malta Trade Fair - they are in fact planning to distribute for free on a daily basis a large number of solar power water heaters to those who visit the Trade Fair grounds in order to bolster the local penetration of such heaters. One major stumbling block for such a laudable

initiative to materialise is local public procurement - one augurs that such a hurdle is overcome in order to witness such a milestone act for our islands.

When delving into the subject of trade fairs, one cannot but hover also on the subject on Fair Trade, especially since fairs tailor-made to promote Fair Trade products are already organised locally, besides the Malta Trade Fair event. The Fair Trade movement, also known as the trade justice movement, promotes international labour, environment and

social standards for the production of traded goods and services. The movement focuses in particular on exports from the Third and Second Worlds to the First World; but there are many products sold by Fair Trade retailers which are produced in the First World too.

In October 2006, over 1.5 million disadvantaged producers worldwide were directly benefiting from Fair Trade while an additional 5 million benefited from Fair Trade funded infrastructure and community development projects. Fair Trade has been growing at 37 per cent year to year increase, making people wonder whether Fair Trade is the biggest growing market after the Internet. *Koperattiva Kummerċ Ġust* (KKĠ) was set up in 1996 by the Third World Group (TWG). The TWG is one of the oldest development NGOs in Malta. In 1997, KKĠ received full recognition by the Maltese state under the Cooperative Act. Run on a voluntary basis, KKĠ is today one of the largest cooperatives in Malta with nearly 100 members.

When making their way through stalls of white goods, consumers should reserve special attention to the energy-efficiency label of such goods. The Energy Labelling Directive requires that appliances be labelled to show their power consumption in such a manner that it is possible to compare the efficiency with that of other makes and models. The intention is that consumers will prefer more energy efficient appliances over those with a higher consumption, resulting in less efficient products eventually being withdrawn or decommissioned. The purchase of the most energy efficient white goods (denoted by A's on the accompanying energy label) might involve a higher initial cost but will pay dividends in the long term in the form of energy savings.

Food stalls have their fair share of environmental responsibility to shoulder too. Polystyrene cups (mainly used for hot drinks such as coffee) should not even be on the cards - polystyrene is often also associated with fast food packaging.

Vehicle stands, often a mainstay of the international trade fair, should mainly market those models which consume less fuel and whose emissions are already compliant with Euro 5 and possibly even Euro 6 emissions standards (the latter will come in force in 2014). In order to stem the traffic mayhem normally associated with such events, public transport and park and ride analogies should also be heavily adopted.

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