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ExxonMobil Appoints Zestcor as Distributor of Its Base Stocks in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Region

ExxonMobil last Tuesday announced it has signed a new distributor agreement with Zestcor, an experienced sales, procurement and supply chain management company in South Africa. The agreement is designed to support an efficient and reliable supply of high-quality base stocks in South Africa and the sub-Saharan region. Zestcor has a distinct local business footprint in the South African petrochemicals industry as a Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Company. This commercial relationship will expand ExxonMobil's global presence and provide local customers additional access to base stocks capable of meeting a broad range of blending needs. "We are committed to providing a reliable supply of high-quality products to our valued customers around the world," said Julia Ruessmann, EAME Basestocks and Specialties Sales Manager at ExxonMobil. "Zestcor not only complements ExxonMobil's position in South Africa by providing local supply chain solutions, but supports our long-term commitment to meeting customer demands in country." Zestcor is uniquely equipped to receive bulk ExxonMobil shipments and handle both truck loading and delivery, as well as pipeline transfers, with their strategically placed bulk onshore tank storage facilities at Bidvest Tank Terminals in Island View, Durban. "At Zestcor, product integrity and quality control are at the forefront of what we do," said Nic Dunn, Director at Zestcor. "Partnering with a global leader like ExxonMobil, who not only shares these values, but promotes them as a pillar of their business operations, makes perfect sense for us. We also believe that South Africa will benefit by having additional local access to high-quality base stocks." From its website, Zestcor sources Group I base oil direct from major refineries in Europe, as well as Group II base oil sourced direct from the SK refinery in South Korea and SK Yubase Group III base oils (3, 4, 6 & 8).

Evonik Opens Research Hub in Singapore

Germany-based specialty chemicals company Evonik last Friday opened its first research hub for resource efficiency topics in Singapore, internationalizing its research into the areas of functional surfaces and additive manufacturing. Furthermore the new R&D hub will be the home for Evonik's project house tissue engineering, which is under the leadership of Creavis, the strategic innovation unit of Evonik. Overall the new hub in Singapore showcases Evonik's strategic decision to expand the internationalization of its research and development activities. "Innovation is an integral part of our growth strategy," said Harald Schwager, Deputy Chairman of the Board for Evonik Industries during the opening ceremony. "We are actively pursuing new opportunities to boost our international R&D activities and the opening of this research hub is a significant contribution to these efforts. By focusing on promising research areas for the future this hub will strengthen our position as a global leader in specialty chemicals." The company stated that Singapore combines the best of two worlds: highly qualified researchers from leading science faculties and quick reaction times of local administration. "This research hub is ideally located to drive innovation for our Resource Efficiency segment by developing forward-looking solutions and technologies for our clients in all global markets", added Claus Rettig, Chairman of the Board of Management, Evonik Resource Efficiency GmbH. He said: "With this new hub, we are taking advantage of a new approach to research: Enabling a creative environment for innovations and encouraging agile, flexible working." Located in Biopolis, the home for international and groundbreaking research in Singapore, the hub offers national and international professionals and graduates – spanning from engineers to scientists – a creative environment for innovative ideas in a highly interactive workplace. Talent from all over the world will be brought together to carry out pioneering R&D by integrating scientific and technological capabilities in a collaborative lab concept, the company stated. With the research hub, Evonik is expanding its collaboration with public and private research institutions and organizations. Evonik has formed a partnership with Nanyang Technological University, Singapore to develop novel technologies in additive manufacturing for industrial application. "Evonik has been present in Singapore for more than 20 years and our strong regional footprint has positioned us as a market leader in the speciality chemical industry, particularly in Asia," said Peter Meinshausen, President of Evonik Asia Pacific South. "The research hub will not only reinforce our competitive position, but will also play a critical role in pioneering impactful innovations to address industry needs and challenges in and beyond this region in the years ahead."

Sweden Opens "Electrified" Road

The first road of its kind to allow both commercial and passenger vehicles to be recharged while driving was inaugurated in Sweden last week. Sweden has unveiled a new 1.2 miles (2 km) stretch of road near Stockholm which allows, for the first time, cars and trucks to charge their batteries while driving. An electric rail has been installed in the road between the Arlanda Cargo Terminal and the Rosersberg logistics area near Stockholm. The system works much like toy electric slot cars work. The electrification works by connecting the chassis of the cars to the ground rail via a moveable arm. Electricity is transferred from the charged part of the road to the car's battery, keeping electric vehicles topped up with enough energy. The arm detects the location of the rail in the road and as long as the vehicle is above the rail, the contact will be in a lowered position. The arm can easily be disconnected to help cars overtake as well. The only time the tracks are electrified is when the electric vehicle's contact arm touches them, eliminating the danger of a live track such as those on subways. Sensors on the car tell the car when to drop the contact arm down to draw power from the road and when to recline to let the car's battery take over. The eRoadArlanda project is being managed by a consortium of 22 companies, comprised of the following members: Elways, NCC, PostNord (Sweden's national postal service), ABTbolagen, Vattenfall, DAF, KTH, Kilenkrysset, VTI, E-traction, GCT, KTH, Bilprovingen, Airport City Stockholm, Sigtuna Municipality, Swedavia, Arlanda Stad Holding, TraningPartner, FirstHotel, Frost Produktion, SMM Dulevo and Sandströms Elfirma. At the inauguration ceremony last week, the Director-General for the Swedish Transport Administration, Lena Erixon, commented: "It is important to break new ground when it comes to climate-smart road transport. That's why the Swedish Transport Administration supports innovative development projects that contribute to long-term, sustainable solutions." Hans Säll, Chairman of the eRoadArlanda group concluded: "One of the most important issues of our time is the question of how to make fossil-free road transportation a reality. We now have a solution that will make this possible, which is amazing. Sweden is at the cutting edge of this technology, which we now hope to introduce in other areas of the country and the world." The test track is located on a ten-kilometer section of Road 893 between Arlanda Cargo Terminal and the Rosersberg logistics area, of which two kilometers are electrified for the demonstration project. The vehicle primarily planned to use the electrified road is an 18-ton truck that will be carrying goods for PostNord. It is hoped that the trial road could be used to electrify Sweden's 20,000 kilometres of highways and exported to help other countries wean themselves off fossil fueled transportation. At an estimated cost of €1 million per kilometre the rail technology is seen as a much cheaper alternative to urban trams. In June 2016, a similar type road was opened near the city of Gävle in central Sweden, but utilized overhead lines connected to vehicles, much like trams are connected to overhead power cables. The two-kilometre strip on the E16 motorway saw electrified trucks from Scania driven in open traffic, using conductive technology developed by Siemens.

Volvo Trucks Launches First Commercial Electric Truck

Volvo Trucks has introduced its first all-electric truck for commercial use – the Volvo FL Electric for urban distribution and refuse operations, among other applications. Sales and series production of the new model will start in Europe next year. With this introduction Volvo Trucks takes the lead in solutions for electrified goods transport in cities. "We're immensely proud to present the first in a range of fully electrically-powered Volvo trucks ready for regular traffic. With this model we are making it possible for cities that aim for sustainable urban development to benefit from the advantages of electrified truck transports," says Claes Nilsson, President Volvo Trucks. With better air quality and less noise in the city, it is possible to plan for housing and infrastructure more freely than at present. An electric truck without any exhaust emissions can be used in indoor terminals and environmental zones. Their low noise level creates opportunities for doing more work at night, thus reducing the burden on the roads during the day. There is considerable market interest in electric trucks. Volvo said that many potential customers have questions about the opportunities generated by the new technology and how it can impact their operations. "In order to make the transition secure and smooth, we will offer holistic solutions based on each customer's individual needs regarding driving cycles, load capacity, uptime, range and other parameters. Such a solution may encompass everything from route analysis and battery optimisation to servicing and financing. Volvo Trucks works closely with several suppliers of charging equipment. The aim as always is to offer customers high uptime and productivity," says Jonas Odermalm, head of product strategy Volvo FL and Volvo FE at Volvo Trucks. Backing the Volvo Trucks offer is the Volvo Group's accumulated expertise in electrified transport solutions. Sister company Volvo Buses has sold more than 4000 electrified buses since 2010. The technology used for propulsion and energy storage in the Volvo FL Electric has been thoroughly tried and tested from the outset and is supported by Volvo Trucks' far-reaching network for sales, service and parts supply. "From experience we know how important it is that cities, energy suppliers and vehicle manufacturers cooperate in order for large-scale electrification to become a reality. With attractive incentives, agreed standards and a long-term strategy for urban planning and expansion of the charging infrastructure, the process can go much faster," explains Jonas Odermalm. Volvo Trucks believes that it is essential to take a holistic view of electrification of the transport sector to handle the ongoing challenges in areas such as electricity generation and batteries. "For instance, in order to ensure that raw materials for the batteries are extracted in a responsible way, the Volvo Group works with the Drive Sustainability network, which has a special function that monitors this issue. The Volvo Group is also involved in various projects where batteries from heavy electric vehicles get a second lease of life, reused for energy storage. All the questions about handling of batteries have not yet been solved, but we are working actively both within the Group and together with other actors to drive development and create the necessary solutions," says Jonas Odermalm. The first trucks in the Volvo FL Electric range are now entering regular operation with customers in Gothenburg, the home of Volvo Trucks. Facts - Fully electrically-powered truck for distribution, refuse collection and other applications in urban conditions, GVW 16 tonnes. - Driveline: 185 kW electric motor, max power/130 kW continuous output, two speed transmission, propeller shaft, rear axle. Max torque electric motor 425 Nm. Max torque rear axle 16 kNm. - Energy storage: 2-6 lithium-ion batteries, totalling 100-300 kWh. - Range: Up to 300 km. - Charging: AC charging via the mains grid (22 kW) or DC fast charge via CCS/Combo2 for up to 150 kW. - Recharging time: From empty to fully charged batteries: fast charge 1-2 hours (DC charging), night charge up to 10 hours (AC charging) with maximum battery capacity of 300 kWh. - The first two Volvo FL Electric trucks will be operated by refuse collection and recycling company Renova and haulage firm TGM. - The Off Peak City Distribution project studied the effects of goods transport at night in central Stockholm. By avoiding peak hour traffic the trucks were able to do their jobs in one-third of the time compared to daytime operation.

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