

5 minutes with... Steve Hurff, Vice President for Marketing and Sales at DuPont Tate and Lyle Bio Products.

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In 2004, **DuPont Tate & Lyle Bio Products** entered into a joint venture, investing \$100 million to commercialise a new high-performance, renewably sourced biomaterial to help reduce global dependence on petroleum-based materials. DuPont Tate & Lyle Bio Products, announced its first commercial shipments of a breakthrough biomaterial, bio-based 1,3-propanediol (Bio-PDO) ten years ago. Four years later in 2011, it announced an expansion increasing capacity by 35% at its facility in Loudon, Tennessee. DuPont Tate & Lyle Bio Products provides solutions for a wide variety of markets and applications through its bio-based performance brands Susterra and Zemea propanediol. Its regulated markets include personal care, cosmetics, flavours, pharmaceuticals, household laundry and cleaning products, purchase Zemea propanediol. Whilst the industrial markets consist of heat transfer fluids, polyurethanes – outsoles, waterproof breathable films, cast parts such as wheels, synthetic leather, coatings, adhesives, etc. purchase Susterra propanediol. Today with thousands of customers around the globe and products in most major consumer and industrial market segments, DuPont Tate & Lyle Bio Products celebrate a decade of offering higher-performing ingredients from a petroleum-free, sustainable and renewable source. This week **Steve Hurff, Vice President - Marketing & Sales** spoke to **Emily O'Dowd** to discuss the company's successes in the bio-based market and his individual journey.



Emily O'Dowd (EOD): What has led you to this role?

Steve Hurff (SH): I have been a life-long DuPont ([@DuPont News](#)) employee with a strong technical and business background, particularly with experiences in new product commercialisation across several businesses and markets at a global scale. Specifically, what sparked my interest in this role was the combination of the new Bio-PDO plant start-up in late 2006 and DuPont's corporate objective to move value chains away from their dependency on fossil fuels. There was a need for a commercial officer on the newly formed joint venture, DuPont Tate & Lyle Bio

Products, to build and lead a new sales organization in the world of bio-based “green” chemicals. I was fortunate to be the candidate selected for this position almost 10 years ago. It truly seems like yesterday.

EOD: What do you enjoy most about your role?

SH: I am in a customer facing role which means that our team handles marketing, sales and technical customer service support. But what particularly excites me about this is our ability to understand the value that this bio-based building block can provide in so many different and unique value chains. We have been able to help our customers translate technical knowledge into valuable products that perform and resonate across the supply chain.

I think that to be successful in this sort of market you need to have the combination of a bio-based product that performs and a sustainability story which can add value to all of the customers and suppliers in the various value chains. For me, it is exciting when those efforts result in the launch of a new product.

EOD: Where are most of your customers based?

SH: We have a global focus with the majority of customers in North America, Western Europe and Northern Asia. However, our customer base continues to grow around the world.

EOD: What is the biggest challenge that you have faced in the industry?

SH: When you have new innovations either material or technology, creating the value chain adoption is always hard work. It is important to make sure that our story and our message resonates value and performance along the chain. This message can be difficult to get right because the way that you speak to a brand owner will be different to the way you approach your direct customers and the converters that are positioned in the middle of value chains.

EOD: What advice would you give for someone starting work in the bio-based industry?



SH: The main thing I would say is that you need to be out in the market early, well before you launch your bio-based product to understand how it could be received, and what the value of it is. You can't build a plant and then go and find your customers. I would

advise that you invest in market development and identify strategic applications for



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your product well ahead of your commercial launch. And always focus on the market before launch - this is key to growing the top-line once you launch. I am a firm believer that early market development investment is just as critical as technology investment to enable business success.

EOD: What's the most significant change that you've noticed in the bio-based space?

SH: In the last ten years the biggest change has been the growing interest and desire for many companies to move towards a greener more sustainable space. Ten years ago, people liked to listen but they weren't prepared to move forward or consider how sustainable advancements could become a strategic business move. Now, there are more customers and more markets willing to both explore and adopt bio-based solutions which are sustainable and that perform.

EOD: Where would you like to see your company in 5 years' time?

SH: At DuPont Tate & Lyle Bio Products we quickly assess the potential of new markets and then quickly develop and test our value propositions to see if there is traction. As a joint venture we can react quickly to new market opportunities. In this time scale I forecast that we will see an accelerated adoption for the markets that we are currently reaching out to. But like anything, these things take time. Developing new innovations can take years before the market is really impacted, especially on a global scale. However, I would expect accelerated interest for propanediol in footwear, apparel, transportation, home furnishings and continued adoptions in personal care markets. Our continuous track record of growth means that our future looks bright.

EOD: What single change would help develop the bio-based industry further?

SH: I think it is important for bio-based companies to also think about their sustainability story. You need to quantify your sustainability and build relevant facts showing how your products reduce the environmental footprint. Beyond being bio-based, products must have a quantifiable sustainability story. For our business, we utilise ISO standards for calculating a "life cycle assessment" for our products. This tool quantifies product value in sustainability terms; for example, our bio-based technology emits significantly less greenhouse gases and consumes much less energy for every kilogram of product we produce when compared to similar products made via petroleum processes. This confirms DuPont Tate & Lyle's bio-based products are sustainable as they have a reduced environmental footprint. Industry alignment on sustainability and using science to back-up claims is clearly needed.

EOD: What is your favourite bio-based/sustainable product aside from your own product range?

SH: For me I like all personal care products from around the world that have the words propanediol on their label! Our Zemea brand has rapidly become a day to day



name for personal care formulators. I am also a fan of one of our household product customers, Method Products. I like their company's philosophy of "breaking the petrol chain" in their green products. [Method](#) has been highly successful in utilising bio-based and sustainable ingredients in their products.



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