

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST MEETING

April 7-10, 1986, Louisville

Delegates at this unique meeting (the first in living memory to join product and leaf skills from major BAT companies) agreed on the following:

A. Key Technical Issues

1. Leaf

The integration of leaf blending and product development which is proceeding either formally or informally in all countries is greatly assisting the development of superior products.

The ability to upgrade low quality tobaccos is becoming critical due to import restrictions, cost pressures, and, in the U.S. the POOL buy out. The Southampton program to explore DIET as a means of improvement was endorsed but further research is needed. Brazil faces critical problems now with its current flue-cured inventory.

Considerable interest was expressed in B&W's Y1 strain which is now available in sufficient quantity for sample production.

Concern was expressed over the decrease in knowledge in the group of oriental tobacco, and the sparse staffing overseeing purchases. B&W will send leaf blenders to Turkey this year for training.

2. Reconstituted

B&W has shown that reconstitution can provide an aid to smoking quality with EBR and the joint Canadian exercise. Extrusion experiments in Hamburg and Southampton show promise. This technology is more suitable for smaller companies. Findings from the B&W ammonia program will be incorporated into this technology as appropriate.

3. Ammonia

B&W's current status and plans were shared. It seems that one way or another Philip Morris incorporates this technology into its U.S. blended type products in most territories and possibly in some flue-cured products. B&W will continue to share information and provide sample materials as developed.

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4. Filling Power

BAT has considerable expertise in filling power improvement which makes further weight savings through DIET type processes difficult to incorporate, as Canadian and German experience exemplifies. Southampton sees the APEX process as potentially providing the weight reduction of DIET with a smaller percentage of expanded lamina.

Both B&W and Australia are in the process of SDS implementation. While no smoking quality changes are noted with the material per se, there are process advantages, increased design flexibility and potential weight reductions without puff number losses. Hamburg are well satisfied with the STS (Steam Treated Stem) process they now use. Higher fibre, lower chalk papers developed by Southampton in association with deMauduit have helped to regain some of the puff number lost by filling power improvement.

The controversial subject of cut tobacco drying, CONAIR versus ROTARY, is being reexamined in Louisville and Hamburg. Should smoking quality improvements be noted, the stem and lamina expansion processes discussed above can probably offset any filling power losses.

5. Product Testing

Considerable interest was expressed in the new Hamburg methodology which is being followed-up by BAT-Suisse. The key point is the ability to separate different clusters of smokers by the attribute structures of their preferences. B&W and Brazil are attempting similar work on a smaller scale and have both identified "bitterness" as a weakness in their brands.

Canada showed some interesting effects of masking and pack presentation on attribute perceptions. This has considerable product testing and test market implications and needs follow-up.

Product mapping continues to arouse interest. Used judiciously with relevant chemical, spectroscopic, and sensory data it can provide a sound base for hypothesis testing.

All delegates endorsed development of product development briefs/ charters jointly with marketing and marketing research at the beginning of new projects.

6. Process

Cased burley redrying remains more of an art than a science. Another set of experiments with Southampton's processing cylinder is probably needed provided that smoking quality effects can be clearly identified and tied to specific chemical changes. It is only in this way that operating parameters for a commercial redryer can be objectively optimized.

B. Exchange and Cooperation Mechanisms

The openness of all delegates at this meeting heralded a new era for technical exchange in the BAT Group. All present wanted this to continue. Recipes for best products were exchanged and are included in the detailed information packets sent to all delegates.

People now know who to call about specific problems.

Short term, four to eight week, secondments should be encouraged. (The six weeks Gert Rudolph has just spent in Louisville catalyzed B&W efforts in chemosensory research.)

Intercompany visits to discuss problems, progress, and plans remain the best way to exchange information fast, and to build ideas for future new products and product improvements.

The delegates wish to reconvene a year from now to review together the rapid changes that are occurring in leaf and product technology.

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