NO DEAL? UK SUPERMARKET MERGER IN DOUBT

The merger between UK Supermarket giants Sainsbury’s and Asda has been thrown into serious doubt after Britain's competition watchdog raised a number of concerns, including higher prices and reduced quality and choice for customers.

In a provisional verdict on the planned £10bn merger, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said it had found "extensive competition concerns." In a statement, the CMA said the merger would create a "substantial lessening of competition at both a national and local level.

The merger of Britain's second and third-largest supermarkets would create a market-leading chain with some 2,800 supermarkets and convenience stores, overtaking current market leader Tesco.

The CMA laid out limited options for addressing the concerns but said it was "likely to be difficult for the companies to address the concerns it has identified.

Options include blocking the deal altogether or "requiring the merging companies to sell off a significant number of stores and other assets – potentially including one of the Sainsbury’s or Asda brands – to recreate the competitive rivalry lost through the merger.”

Welcome back!

Editor’s note

A warm hello to all our regular readers and a special welcome to those reading erpecnews for the first time. In the closed period over the holidays we added many new readers, not only from Europe, but also from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. We have a busy programme ahead with eight oil company articles in the pipeline for 2019, plus a special feature on every sector of the market over the next eight issues. ENTV will be bringing more video films than ever before published on erpecnewslive.com and across our fast growing social media networks. This month we have special features on MOL’s annual competition, Freshhh, which is designed to discover Europe’s best from a pick of future engineers. Read on and find out about the fuel we put in people’s tanks, which is not always as clean as it might be and why it is that products from Germany often seem to be the most reliable. Happy March. Ed.

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HOW CLEAN IS THE FUEL YOU ARE SELLING TO MOTORISTS?

by Nick Needs

Last month the erpecnews crew made a trip to sunny Barcelona to attend a worldwide summit of licensees, organised by Tanknology, the leading global provider of environmental compliance testing and inspection services.

The event had a great turnout. I think it is fair to say, with some delegates travelling from as far as South America, Australia and South Africa to hear the presentations, which took place over three days at the Barcelona Raddison Marriott Hotel.

It was a brilliant initiative to be a part of, most probably because the participants appeared so open to new suggestions on best practice and also some effective and practical new ideas, designed to help them with their businesses.

The Summit included seminar sessions on Tank Cleaning, Fuel Polishing, Biocides and Ethanol along with group discussions on Providing Tank Tightness Testing in Non-Retail Markets and Fuel Quality Management. Also present were several oil company retail engineers, coming to share in the discussion and listen to the key product initiatives being presented. Even I joined in the lively debate on why training through inspiration, motivation and care is the key to having a happy, effective, qualified and happy workforce, something I have discovered on many factory visits over the years.

It was the presentation by LCM Environmental though, that especially grabbed my interest, delivered by Managing Director, Mark Orr. He argued that testing the quality of fuel in petrol and diesel tanks has never been more important due to the wider implications of using biofuels in tanks and the importance of reducing harmful vehicle emissions. Strangely enough it seems there are not many retailers out there doing it and there seems to be no legislation in place which requires fuel to be checked at any stage of delivery.

I was comforted to learn that prior to an aircraft taking delivery of fuel, the CAA legislates for two on the spot checks to take place, which look for traces of alien particles or water to ensure that the quality of the fuel has not been compromised in any way. The final check before delivery is a ‘Bright and Clear’ visual inspection where, just like a good beer, operatives can see if there are any abnormalities in the look of the product before sending it off.

I must confess I was amazed to learn that there are no such checks at any part of the procedure for delivering fuel to our forecourts.

LCM, working with Tanknology on several parts of its business, advocates the need for the fuel in tanks to be regularly checked for contamination, especially if it may have been in place for some time. As Kevin Airy, from Shell retail engineering pointed out at the meeting, there is no need for too much concern if a site is turning over vast amounts of fuel in a very short space of time, like most Shell sites do, but in the cases of the slower moving stations and certainly commercial outlets, factory depots etc, there is a huge need to keep on top of this potentially hazardous situation.

What LCM provides is a fully automated sampling and testing unit, evaluating the contamination levels of fuel against internationally recognised standards. Currently, fuel is tested by sampling manually, before being analysed in laboratories to measure the properties of the fuel against international standards. Manual sampling introduces the potential for errors in the final measurements, such as using dirty bottles or sampling devices, poor post-sampling handling, storage at incorrect temperature, long periods between collection and analysis and, of course, human error. With the LCM solution, all data is stored securely on a cloud database ensuring maximum availability for monitoring on a web-based dashboard. This user interface, accessed through an encrypted login portal, displays both real-time qualities of the fuel as well as past trends of each client site. Local weather data is also integrated into the dashboard, allowing the influence of environmental conditions on the degradation of the fuel to be assessed.

For further details visit Tanknology at www.tanknology.com or LCM Environmental at www.lcmenvironmental.com

As regards the Tanknology Licensee Summit, look out for the videos on www.erpecnewslive.com and on LinkedIn, which include interviews with Allen Porter President CEO of Tanknology and Mark Orr Managing Director of LCM Environmental.