

Making the right choice

When choosing an FIBC supplier, focus on price alone can be costly. Quality and business ethics are equally important factors. For this reason EFIBCA has launched two initiatives to help FIBC users make a better informed choice.

The European market for FIBCs is more competitive and globalised than ever, with the majority of FIBC imports originating from India, Turkey and China. On the one hand, consumers of FIBC are cost conscious with an eye on the bottom line. On the other hand, compromising on safety or ethical principles is no solution.

Users who make poorly informed decisions when sourcing FIBCs put their company and personnel at risk – a non-conformant FIBC can pose risks to health, the environment, company reputation and not least, financial performance. To aide FIBC consumers in making well-informed decisions, the European Flexible Intermediate Bulk Container Association (EFIBCA) has started two new initiatives: the EFIBCA-Q Quality Pledge and the EFIBCA Code of Conduct.

Standards for quality and safety of FIBCs used in Europe have been a key topic at EFIBCA since the founding of the association in 1983. In fact, EFIBCA developed the first internationally recognised quality standards in 1985. These served as the foundation for the ISO 21898 standard which followed. Since then, further regulations have emerged for the transport of food, hygienic products and dangerous goods in FIBC and minimising the risk of electrostatic charge.

However, conformance with quality standards is not a given in a price-driven market. Practice shows that safety is still a concern – avoidable accidents occur too often. A poorly constructed FIBC or one not fit for intended use can tear,

puncture or burst, putting operators in considerable danger.

Furthermore, human health and the environment can come to harm if inferior quality or not fit for purpose FIBC are used for dangerous goods. Similarly, quality and static protective standards must be upheld in potentially explosive environments and with powdery, dusty filling material. The consequences of accidents and incidents through non-conforming FIBCs can be great and the financial losses significant.

Quality and safety are highly regulated areas and difficult to navigate for those not immersed in the subject. Many end users of FIBCs lack this specialised knowledge. **EFIBCA-Q** aims to raise awareness among users of FIBCs about quality and safety standards relevant for different types of FIBCs. The initiative consists of a voluntary pledge by manufacturers and suppliers to conform with the EFIBCA-Q Quality Criteria, a list of specifications and requirements relevant for different types of FIBCs (see table 1).

Subscribers to EFIBCA-Q furthermore commit to provide their customers with detailed information on all quality requirements and to provide evidence of compliance on request. The EFIBCA-Q Quality Criteria as well as evidence can be requested from the FIBC supplier and are also made transparent to FIBC users through publication on EFIBCA's homepage. Users of FIBCs are encouraged to engage with their FIBC supplier on the EFIBCA-Q Quality Criteria and to include these criteria in their supplier audits.

Legal compliance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are also areas of concern for users and suppliers of FIBCs alike. Conformity with fundamental legal requirements in the fields of competition and antitrust law as well as

internationally accepted ethical principles are a prerequisite for doing business with many companies. A Code of Conduct is an efficient means for users to determine which business partners are committed to basic ethical principles. In dialogue with its members, EFIBCA has developed a code of conduct for its member companies to uphold in their business dealings.

The **EFIBCA Code of Conduct** is a voluntary agreement, through which EFIBCA member companies guarantee the observance of globally recognised principles of ethical behaviour as well as the standards of proper business conduct in the areas of competition and antitrust law. This also means promoting fair and sustainable standards dealing with suppliers, customers and with company personnel as well. Respect for human rights and protection of the environment are at the heart of Corporate Social Responsibility.

An overview of references made in the EFIBCA Code of Conduct is given in table 1. Subscribers to the Code of Conduct also commit to take reasonable action to provide employee training with regard to the contents of the Code of Conduct, create accountability and internal procedures, where necessary, and aim for affiliates, subcontractors and other business partners to also accept the standards set in the Code of Conduct. In order to obtain a certification, subscribers must take part in a regular survey taken every two years.

Business partners may sometimes expect other companies to accept their code of conduct when a contract is concluded. If a company agrees to this, the business partner's code will form part of the civil law relationship between the parties. This may also involve consequences under liability law and should therefore be avoided. If both contracting parties have their own codes of conduct, the problem can be solved by way of mutual recognition. As a branch codex, the acceptance of the EFIBCA Code of Conduct on the market may be higher than of individual company codes.

EFIBCA-Q and the EFIBCA Code of Conduct are voluntary company commitments. No audits are performed by EFIBCA to guarantee that these commitments are adhered to per se, however non-conformance can result in exclusion or annulment of certification respectively. Both initiatives are intended to increase consumer awareness and transparency. EFIBCA strongly encourages all FIBC users to engage with their suppliers on these issues and to integrate the relevant standards in their supplier audits (see figure 1).

Further information on EFIBCA-Q and EFIBCA Code of Conduct as well as subscribing companies are available at www.efibca.com



EFIBCA-Q logo



EFIBCA Code of Conduct logo

30 Years of Engineering Excellence
CONCEPT > COMMISSIONING > SUPPORT

Get Your FIBC Right

With Our Experience, R&D and Continuous Innovation

Global Presence
70
Countries

1000 Tapelines • 40,000 Looms

30 years of excellence
With over three decades of experience and as a leading global supplier of machinery for plastic woven fabric, Lohia delivers reliable and competitive products to its customers. These products, in turn help our customers reduce the cost of quality.

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TAPE EXTRUSION LINE • TAPE WINDER • CIRCULAR LOOM • EXTRUSION COATING MACHINE
PRINTING MACHINE • BAG CONVERSION SYSTEM • MULTIFILAMENT SPIN-DRAW-WIND LINE

Table 1

Basic quality and ethical standards referred to by EFIBCA-Q and the EFIBCA Code of Conduct

Subscribers of EFIBCA-Q commit to adhere to:

- Basic requirements, i.e. European Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive 94/62/EC and related harmonised CEN standards EN 13427 to 13432, product liability insurance and REACH regulation (EC) No 1907/2006
- Requirements for All Non-Dangerous Goods FIBC, i.e. ISO 21898:2004 and internal quality assurance programmes per ISO 9001:2008 or 22000:2005
- Requirements for FIBCs for the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UN Requirements), i.e. ADR, RID and IMDG
- Requirements for Static Protective Bags, i.e. IEC 61340-4-4:2012 (Ed. 2.0): Electrostatics Part 4-4
- Requirements for Hygiene Bags, i.e. EN 15593:2008-05 or other globally recognised hygiene standards
- Requirements for Food Contact Bags, i.e. Framework Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004, Regulation (EC) No 2023/2006, Regulation (EU) No 10/2011 and amendments, European Directive 82/711/EEC and amendments, European Directive 85/572/EEC and amendments

Subscribers of the EFIBCA Code of Conduct commit to:

- General provisions, i.e. observance of the law and general ethic values and principles, such as integrity, fairness and honesty and preservation of trade secrets
- Antitrust and competition law requirements
- Global Conventions, such as the UN Human Rights Charter and ILO labour conventions regarding child labour, forced labour, wages, working hours, health and employment protection as well as environmental protection
- Ethical and social principles at work, i.e. non-discrimination, non-molestation, freedom of opinion and privacy
- Take reasonable action to provide employee training with regard to the contents of the Code of Conduct, create accountability and internal procedures where necessary, and aim for affiliates, subcontractors and other business partners to also accept the standards set in the Code of Conduct.