



Metabolix lands Newell Rubbermaid biz

By Frank Esposito

PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

CHICAGO — Bioplastics maker Metabolix has landed a pretty big fish in the sea of consumer products: Consumer and commercial products maker Newell Rubbermaid.

Sandy Springs, Ga.-based Newell Rubbermaid will use Mirel-brand bioplastic made by Telles — the bioplastics joint venture between Metabolix and Archer Daniels Midland — in an unspecified consumer-based retail product, Telles' Bob Findlen said in a June 24 interview at NPE2009. Findlen is vice president of sales and marketing for the Lowell, Mass.-based firm.

Newell Rubbermaid "is a perfect example of a company that can package a product, say it's biodegradable and show the benefit to the environment," Findlen added.

The product will be commercially available later this year. Newell Rubbermaid chose Mirel "after thoroughly evaluating various bio-based materials," senior development manager Bret Marschand said in a June 23 news release.

"Mirel molds very well and processes in conventional injection molding equipment," Marschand added. "Add these performance characteristics to biodegradability, and we've found a remarkable material that fits into our global corporate sustainability goals."

Mirel is a corn sugar-based polyhydroxyalkanoate resin that is biodegradable when disposed of in natural soil and water environments, or in home or industrial com-

posting facilities. The first commercial-scale Mirel production plant — a 110 million-pound-capacity plant located next to an ADM corn mill in Clinton, Iowa — will open by the end of 2009.

Mirel currently is produced in pilot amounts at several locations, including Cambridge and Lowell.

The Telles/Newell Rubbermaid deal was the third announced by Metabolix at NPE2009. Earlier in the week, the firm revealed deals with injection molder Nypro Inc. to develop a new grade of Mirel aimed at the injection molding market and with Teknor Color Co. on a range of Mirel-based color concentrates.

Bioplastics have enjoyed a surge of interest recently as retailers and consumers lean toward sustainable products. But this growing popularity also has created a need for accurate third-party testing of materials in order to prove their claims, said Findlen, who also serves as chairman of the Society of the Plastics Industry's Bioplastics Council.

"We have to bring some clarity to that," he said. "Once we add clarity, we can spend less time educating customers and more time on improving our products and making them profitable."