

Editorial

Last year was a bumper year as far as technical conferences and symposia devoted to thermal dehydration are concerned. Major international conferences were held in Karlstad, Sweden (3rd Nordic Drying Conference), Montreal, Canada (3rd Inter-American Drying Conference), Poznan, Poland (XI Polish Drying Conference), Nanjing, China (China Drying Conference), and Kolkatta, India (4th Asia-Pacific Drying Conference). In addition, conferences held in Muscat, Oman and Moscow, Russia had significant contributions devoted to thermal drying. This is in addition to what is usually covered in major national and international conferences which are disciplinary i.e. those devoted to agricultural, food, chemical, pharmaceutical, pulp and paper engineering and technology. Collectively this represents a major R&D thrust which is continuing to grow rapidly especially in the rapidly developing economies of the world.

Emerging economies are developing their manufacturing base rather rapidly with locally developed technologies. Thus, Brazil and China appear to top the list of drying R&D personnel followed by India. Poland has been a consistent contributor to drying R&D while many other European countries appear to have followed a less clear path. As tens of hundreds of products need to be dried using scores of dryer types, it is clear that much remains to be achieved particularly in the absence of a definitive drying theory. Such new applications as nanomaterials, and biotechnology products will drive new areas of R&D n drying in the coming decade.

I believe that drying R&D has reached a sustainable level. It is not desirable to have a drop but there is no urgent need to expand the global effort in drying R&D. Since much research is serial or sequential in nature, rather than parallel, too much funding with resulting overpopulation of researchers in the field, there is a danger of duplication and thus poor utilization of a scarce commodity. Also, the returns on investment in drying R&D will be consistent with what the market can bear. With the unavoidable accelerating rise of energy costs, it does not require a rocket scientist to predict that drying technology enhancement will be essential in all industrial sectors. Use of renewable resources to power dryers will receive renewed attention in most parts of the globe.

I am sure that readers of this journal will continue to benefit from R& D accomplishments already disseminated and new ones which will continue to appear in the coming years.

Arun S. Mujumdar
Singapore