



Now the world is caught up in the Coronavirus crisis that began in China and has now spread all over the world, perhaps it is a good time for us all to reflect. It has taught us that we have become far too dependent on supplies out of the Far East, which has made almost everything much more difficult to obtain in our hour of need. The supply problems affect so many aspects of our everyday lives such as medication, essential components for machinery such as car parts. This has directly affected so many other industrial activities including the supply of rubber conveyor belts where Chinese manufacturers are taking over the market supplying belts of often very doubtful quality that are simply designed to be cheap.

I am wondering what the world will do once the Coronavirus (and the following economical) crisis is eventually over. Will companies go back and work with imported products that in 80 -90 % of the cases do not comply with the quality and safety standards and specifications that they are supposed to comply with? Even worse, buy imported products that have almost a complete disregard for the impact on the environment such as the use of Persistent Organic Pollutants or substances believed to cause various forms of cancer? We know it conveyor belts all look like long lengths of black rubber but when it comes to quality, safety, and our environment it is more than just a question of colour or price.

I hope that the users of conveyor belts will re-think their purchasing criteria and stop buying from suppliers who are simply cheating on the specifications.

Abrasion-resistant belts that are less abrasion resistant than what is promised. Oil resistant belts that only have a very limited resistance to oil; heat resistant belts that cannot handle the temperatures they are supposed to handle and worse still, belts that are claimed to be fire-resistant but actually burn like paper when exposed to flame. Or will it be business as usual and the buyers will only look at the up-front prices that Chinese manufacturers are using to kill off European competition?

In the end, we all know that a good product will perform better and give the Lowest Life Time cost. We must move away from the 'Throw Away' thinking, which we so often see not only in private life but also in business. Simply buying products that are made honestly in Europe and that are designed to last and not damage our environment surely must be a lesson that we learn from this terrible crisis.

Let's see what happens!

Best regards,

Andries Smilda