RDC enables quick pandemic response

Responsible Distribution Canada worked with distributors, other industry associations and the government to maximise the distribution of hand sanitizer

Cathy Campbell Responsible Distribution Canada

Responsible Distribution (RD) began in 1990 following a couple of major chemical incidents around the world. One of these was a train derailment in 1979, which resulted in an explosion in Mississauga, Ontario. This was the impetus for Canada’s Transportation of Dangerous Goods regulations in 1985. The members of Responsible Distribution Canada (RDC, formerly CACD) knew they had to do something to get ahead of the regulations.

The RD programme has evolved over the last 30 years and is practiced by different countries around the world. The goal of RDC has always been to get recognition from stakeholders for the work involved to achieve compliance and certification.

In 1996 third-party verification was introduced, with a commitment to be re-verified every three years. What makes Canada unique is that every site must be audited tri-annually, not just a percentage or sampling. The programme has “teeth”. In fact, since the programme’s inception, RDC has rescinded membership of six companies that did not meet the requirements of RD.

This is not a simple undertaking. To become a success, it requires resources and a commitment to do the right thing for employees, suppliers, customers, the public and the environment.

RD has matured and many government agencies have given members credit for their efforts by reducing the workload of reporting, giving special permits to RD verified companies and most recently, requesting RDC members be part of a manufacturing exchange with other allied associations to maximise production of hand sanitizers.

Cathy Campbell President, RDC

“It was wonderful to see politics put aside and everyone working together for the better good during the pandemic”

The government wanted to ensure processes were right, and the product handled and distributed responsibly. Regulators worked together to ensure Canadians are safe, and have what they need to stay healthy. It was wonderful to see politics put aside and everyone working together for the better good during the pandemic.

The result of working together was a successful alliance in this time of need for frontline workers, first responders, consumers, communities, industries and governments.

ICTA makes case for globalisation

World trade will revive again. Countries may want to strengthen production of certain essential products but not aim for complete self-sufficiency

Robert Stuyt International Chemical Trade Association

The coronavirus outbreak has tremendous effects on the economy, and thus also on chemical distributors. The virus and the measures to fight it have caused great challenges to prevent supply chain disruptions. The recession caused by the outbreak will negatively affect demand in almost all market segments.

Firstly, I do not believe that the pandemic will lead to de-globalisation. Although world trade is hard hit, it will revive again. The key word now is “resilience”. While countries may want to strengthen vulnerable national production for certain essential products, this does not mean they will aim for complete self-sufficiency.

Supply chains are simply too complex for that. Companies will want to make their supply chains more robust and disruption-proof.

Production lines were previously designed on the principle of “just in time”, but that now becomes “just in case”.

Secondly, it is advised to take sustainability into account when preparing for the restart of the economy. Even with lower oil prices, sustainability is an imperative, especially when working in developing countries. As companies experiment in response to coronavirus, they may find new ways to make their operations more sustainable, e.g. with shorter supply chains, higher energy efficiency processes and digitisation of sales and marketing.

Thirdly, the structure of globalisation is changing. Previously, world trade was stimulated by trade deals which removed import tariffs. Fifty years ago, they amounted to 30% on average - now that’s only 5%.

After getting rid of protectionism, a new threat to global trade emerged - precautionism. Barriers are introduced to protect citizens from possible risks through safety and quality requirements. However, some of these precautionary measures may be disguised protectionism. It is up to industry to raise such issues with policy makers, for instance at the WTO.

To keep the world moving, distributors will have to re-design supply chains to become more resilient and sustainable. While working safely is crucial, safety measures should not be abused for protectionist purposes.