

Royal Ten Cate is going to considerably expand the production of Thiolon® Infill Pro, a patented infill for artificial grass football pitches. This increased capacity will be completely operational with effect from the new season in 2007. As a result of active marketing of this product, the expected gradual decline in price and greater market acceptance, this product will occupy a greater share of the sales from 2007 onwards.

The composition of this infill, which was developed in collaboration with DEX Plastomers, is completely safe: the food packaging industry makes use of the same raw materials of which Thiolon Infill Pro is composed.

During the development of artificial grass pitches and the components required for them, TenCate has constantly stressed the aspect of personal safety, with no recycled products being used. Before being launched, Ten Cate products are extensively tested. There is intensive collaboration with knowledge institutes, test centres, medical specialists and the medical staff of sports clubs. TenCate's objective is to produce an end product that is as safe as possible with optimal sports-related properties.

Control of chemical composition

It has not yet been established that rubber particle infill from third parties, which is made of recycled car tyres and is used in artificial grass football pitches, is actually damaging to health. TenCate prefers to have complete control of the chemical composition, so that any risk is avoided. This is why TenCate itself keeps control of the entire production of its Thiolon® products (grass fibre, backing, infill, sub-base) and develops these products based on its own formulations. By valuing the mention of the TenCate brand name on our products we thus provide at the same time our hallmark of quality. This offers a guarantee of safety and durability.

In addition to safety, a major advantage of Thiolon Infill Pro is that during the lifespan of the pitch its playing properties can be better guaranteed. This infill ensures that no excessive wear of the grass fibre occurs. Grass fibre and infill are optimally geared to each other; this is not the case with a recycled product.

Because the various building blocks of an artificial grass pitch should be optimally geared to each other, TenCate endeavours to operate a systems approach. This guarantees the safety and desired playing properties of the pitch over a period of at least 12 years. In order to achieve optimal playing conditions of artificial grass, in cooperation with the University of Twente, the Institute of Sport & Leisure has been founded, which covers a wide area of research.

Higher standardization of artificial grass sports pitches

Local authorities that switch over to artificial grass sports pitches do this primarily to make maximum use of their urban space. They purchase the pitches on the basis of an economic lifespan of at least 12 years. The safety and sports-related properties should thus be guaranteed during this period. The current standardization system is not in line with this and provides no guarantee of lifespan. This can lead to problems over time. TenCate has for some time been attempting to bring about higher standardization in the field of safety and durability. For this purpose TenCate has approached official sports bodies and test centres. In the field of testing sports-related properties, TenCate is, as market leader, at the cutting edge. The current FIFA/UEFA quality system is a good first step, but still provides too few guarantees for the longer term. Professional clubs have more financial resources to replace pitches in good time and will switch over sooner to new generations.

With the growth of the market and the increase in the number of new suppliers of system components, the quality and safety of artificial grass sports pitches during their entire useful life, which is often longer than 10 years, should continue to be guaranteed. Currently the sector in Europe has no quality guarantee.

TenCate continues to do its utmost to achieve this worldwide and was recently asked by the Chinese sports authorities among others to participate in a development project for top quality artificial grass which will be used during the coming Olympic Games.

Price reduction and technological developments

By expanding the production of infill and upgrading its industrial process, a considerable reduction in price will become possible, as a result of which safe infill will become more affordable for amateur clubs. Currently Thiolon Infill Pro is still exclusively used by a limited number of professional clubs, including Heracles Almelo, AFC Ajax, and the KNVB (Dutch Football Association) pitch in Zeist. The pitch at the FIFA Headquarters, which is still to be installed, will be provided with this infill.

In addition, technological developments are taking place which will break new ground especially for the amateur market. TenCate aims to launch artificial grass football pitches as an integrated system made up of various components, which will be approved for amateur sports. This development too will result in a lower price when purchasing a sports pitch.

Cruyff Courts safe

TenCate has a partnership with the Cruyff Foundation and is responsible for the technical concept of the artificial grass pitches which have now been installed in a large number of Dutch towns and cities. Because TenCate supplies the components for these pitches, we can fully vouch for the safety of these sports pitches. They are guaranteed to be free of toxic substances and thus safe for children.

Advantages of artificial grass sports pitches remain convincing

TenCate believes that the current unrest is not of a permanent nature. Although in the short term the use of safe infill will increase costs compared with recycled rubber, there are major advantages to its use and the playing properties of the sports pitch are better maintained during the lifespan of the pitch.

Since an artificial grass pitch can be played on much more intensively, there is optimal use of space and local authorities consequently create extra space for housing development in urban areas. Artificial grass therefore remains a good alternative to natural grass. Artificial grass has in addition a large number of extra advantages, such as much lower maintenance costs, no use of fertilizer and pesticides and a substantial saving on water. The principal advantage for the sportsmen/women is however that the quality and safety of the sports floor can be determined and that this always retains the same properties.

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Royal Ten Cate

For more information:

TenCate Frank Spaan, Head of Investor Relations/Corporate Communication

Tel: +31 546 544 338

Mobile: +316 12 961 724

www.tencate.com

TenCate Thiolon Ralph Jorissen, Director

Tel: ++ 31 651 369 853

www.thiolon.com