

Cortec making push into biodegradable film

By Joseph Pryweller
PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

CHICAGO — Cortec Corp. is planning a \$5 million expansion of its blown film plant as it tries to become a major player in biodegradable films.

The company primarily is known as a maker of vapor-phase corrosion inhibitors that can be used with stretch film and other products. During an interview Nov. 4 at Pack Expo International 2002 in Chicago, booth workers sported "I Love Rust" buttons.

The move into biodegradable films was a side bonus that has turned into a full-time opportunity, said Bob Boyle, Cortec technical sales representative. The White Bear, Minn., company started film making four years ago when it bought Spring Lake Packaging of Cambridge, Minn.

That led to the discovery that its copolyester film could degrade quickly in compost.

"We used the film at first with our [corrosion inhibitors]," Boyle said. "But when we took the inhibitors out, we found that it still would degrade in a compost. We knew we had something more."

The company continued pilot testing of what it would call Eco Film, mixing it with natural ingredients such as polylactic acid, starch and other blends. The firm has received patents and Food and Drug Administration approval.

Cortec will add 20,000 square feet to the 65,000-square-foot facility by spring, said founder Boris Miksic. A 12-layer coextrusion film line and a 40-foot line to make bubble film will be added to the facility's one coextrusion line.

The facility will make film with and without Cortec's corrosion-resistant additive. The expansion will boost plant capacity to about 50 million pounds annually for PE blown film, a fivefold increase. Miksic said he would like to in-



Bob Boyle, left, and Boris Miksic display a roll of their firm's film.

crease sales from about \$30 million in 2002 to \$100 million in three to five years. The firm is talking to several consumer-products makers about the film, he said, and both General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. may be interested, he said.

Cortec is considering various applications for its film, including liners for dry processed food and cereals, and dry-cleaning bags. The film can be modified for elasticity and thickness and even can replace wax and PE coatings on paper goods, he said.