

Birla Carbon's Sustainability Vision and Growth Strategy



Birla Carbon is the world's leading sustainable manufacturer and supplier of carbon black additives. Birla Carbon's global presence ensures that its carbon black is of the highest quality worldwide, delivering a consistent product to customers everywhere. Whether an established formulation or a custom solution, Birla Carbon is the right partner with the right product for superior performance in any application for tires, specialty blacks and mechanical rubber goods. Rubber World recently spoke to Birla Carbon's president and chief executive officer, John Loudermilk.



Could you start by giving us an overview of Birla Carbon and your current focus areas?

Birla Carbon, as we know it today, was formed after Aditya Birla Group acquired Columbian Chemicals in 2011, though our business roots date back to the 1800s. Our core focus is on carbon black, and we participate across every geography and sector. Today, we are driving growth through innovation and sustainability, underpinned by operational excellence in our core.

We're making large investments in greenfield expansions in India and Thailand, a brownfield expansion in Hungary, and have completed a specialty post-treatment plant in India. These efforts will support not just our core growth, but also our ambitions in new technologies and sustainability.

What is the vision behind your circularity platform, Continua™?

Continua Sustainable Carbonaceous Material is derived from end-of-life tires. Unlike traditional carbon black, it brings both performance and sustainability benefits to several applications. We're leveraging our product knowledge and technical expertise to deliver this consistently at scale. We've partnered with a worldscale facility in Europe and a joint venture in India to deliver this material reliably.

How is Continua different from other recovered carbon black products?

The market has many small producers with inconsistent quality. Continua stands out because of our commitment to quality, scale and application specific performance. We've built the technological infrastructure and quality control systems to deliver consistent products globally. We're also pursuing International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC) PLUS for Continua facilities, just like all our traditional sites.

Besides Continua, in what other sustainable or advanced materials is Birla Carbon investing?

We offer carbon blacks from renewable (bio-based) materials, as well. Beyond that, we are investing in materials for energy systems, like conductive additives and active materials for lithium-ion batteries. For example, we acquired Nanocyl, a multi-wall carbon nanotube company, which enhances performance in high end applications like electronics and automotive.

How is sustainability embedded across your portfolio?

Sustainability is central to everything at Birla Carbon, from reducing rolling resistance in tires to enabling electrification of the transportation industry. We're aiming for a consistent sustainability led growth story, and our global footprint allows us to deliver consistent innovation and supply security across markets.



What are the key challenges and opportunities you see in the Asian market?

Asia, especially India, is our fastest growing market. Regional players are evolving into global ones and are far more open to new technologies. That's a big advantage. The challenge lies in balancing cost and performance, especially in today's economic environment. Everyone wants sustainability, but adoption can slow down if it's not cost-effective. That's where we focus on providing the right balance.

Which industries are currently adopting Continua most actively?

We've seen early adoption in coatings, particularly for EVs and marine applications, because of both sustainability and performance benefits. Tires are the most promising long term opportunity due to their scale and sustainability push. Plastics are another fast moving segment, where Continua works in conjunction with carbon black and carbon nanotubes to provide color, UV protection, and conductivity, adding greater value.

Can you comment on Birla Carbon's position in the wire and cable industry?

We're a global leader in conductive materials for wire and cable. What's exciting is our synergy with sister companies in the Aditya Birla Group, like the newly launched wire and cable business under Ultratech Cement in India. These connections help us collectively push our sustainability goals further.

