

Sumitomo Aims to Commercialize Low-cost Processes in 2016-2017

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Sumitomo Chemical is expediting the development of innovative processes for the low-cost production of its core petrochemicals to commercialize them by 2016 or 2017, when petrochemical production based on shale-gas-derived ethylene is expected to boom in North America and China will be more self-sufficient in petrochemicals.

With the increasingly challenging conditions for petrochemical manufacturers and intensifying competition, the company is leveraging its technological capabilities to raise the cost competitiveness of its petrochemical business, which is centered on basic chemicals like methyl methacrylate monomer and commodity petrochemicals like propylene oxide, polyethylene and polypropylene. It plans to make its domestic operations economically viable by slashing production costs.

A pilot plant is scheduled for construction in 2014 for a single-stage process to produce propylene oxide, in which propylene and oxygen are synthesized directly. It is designed to greatly simplify production activities and heighten cost competitiveness. A promising catalyst is already near realization.

A new process for the production of block copolymers prevents fish-eye formation by minimizing catalyst residues and is more cost effective than the currently mainstream gas-phase process. With a pilot plant already in place, a commercial-scale plant is to be constructed soon.

Other new processes include those for the production of MMA monomer without using any C4 chemicals such as isobutylene, and branched polymers from ethylene exclusively without using any comonomers such as butene and hexane.

Source Japan Chemical Web