Press Release

6 June 2012 Registration No. 2008/0916

In Defence of Phosphate Mining

Following protests by environmental groups to their planned marine phosphate mining projects, Namibian Marine Phosphates (NMP) this week appealed to Namibians to consider the benefits of such industry for food security in years to come.

NMP, a joint partnership between Australia's Minemakers and Union Resources Limited, and Namibia's Tungeni Investments, currently has two marine phosphate mining projects in development off the central coast.

But with an estimate of 3 million tonnes of marketable rock phosphate concentrate to be extracted from there annually, environmental groups at the coast have questioned the impact such mining would have on the quality of seawater and thus marine life.

Agriculture in Namibia, argues Shavana Mushwana of South Africa's Vuma Reputation Management on behalf of the company, has largely been constrained by a low average rainfall and few perennial rivers.

This he says, means the country is forced to rely heavily on its trading partners to feed its citizens. "Namibia now produces 35% of the food it requires for domestic consumption.

This is an impressive achievement in a country which must contend with harsh environmental conditions.

But the country cannot be complacent about this statistic," he says, naming climate change and population growth as factors endangering this achievement.

"Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to lose US$2 billion (N$16,85 billion) a year as maize yields decline by 15% or more from 2020, according to Oxfam.

Agricultural productivity in Africa is expected to drop steadily as the effects of climate change take hold. By 2080, some studies show African crop yields dropping by between 17% and 28%.

Yet at the same time, the world's population is expected to reach nine billion by 2050 – increasing global food demand by 70%. This is bad news for any country which relies on imported food staples," he says.

Given scarce water resources, he says an important strategy for Namibia would be to make fertiliser more accessible to farmers, for whom fertiliser is a significant cost input.

"In this conundrum, Namibia is a more fortunate country than most, because it has a world class resource phosphate deposit on its doorstep. Making use of this resource – an act of nature and geography – has the potential to fundamentally change the future of Namibia, for the better," he says.

The NMP group have maintained that its activities would have minimum impact on seawater quality, though environmental groups have called for this view to be substantiated with more conclusive assessment.

Pending environmental clearance, the mines are expected to go into operation during the third quarter of 2014.

###

NMP Management
For more information visit NMP's FAQs, website, and Facebook
E-mail: info@namphos.com