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MEETING AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE STANDARDS FOR IMPORTED FERTILISER

A CASE STUDY – CHRISTMAS ISLAND

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ABSTRACT

Christmas Island Phosphates Ltd (CIP) mines and processes phosphatic soil at Christmas Island, an Australian territory in the north Indian Ocean, which is shipped to several Asian countries and Australia for the manufacture of fertilisers.

The Australian Commonwealth Government recently increased the powers of the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) to inspect and exclude from importation goods, including fertilisers, entering Australia that may be contaminated with pests or diseases that could adversely affect Australia's agricultural production. This is of course necessary as Australia's agricultural industry is not affected by many of the pests and diseases that afflict many other countries saving billions of dollars in lost production. With rapid wide-spread travel by people between countries and the ever-increasing world trade in agricultural products, the spread of pests and diseases is more likely than in the past.

Quarantine clearances are even required for transport of certain goods within Australia where transmission of unwanted pests and diseases is possible between regions. This means that Christmas Island phosphate has to meet the same AQIS standards for imported fertilisers as all other countries before it enters mainland Australia despite being an Australian territory.

CIP have had to implement a large number of new procedures and increase their quality control monitoring throughout the whole processing trail from mining through drying to shiploading to ensure that they meet the AQIS standards. This presentation outlines the changes implemented by CIP, the consequences of these changes to the company and discusses the relevance of these changes to other companies that export fertilisers into Australia.

Aim of Quality Control:

Maintain product within customers' grade and moisture specifications

Keep organic contamination during mining to a minimum by careful site selection

Screening out as much organic material as possible during processing

Sterilise product in the kiln during drying

Ensure no secondary contamination of sterilised product

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Main changes implemented are as follows:

Mining – better selection of mining areas to reduce organic contamination, strict field screening to reduce plant material in product

Drying – Maintaining high temperatures and kiln residence times to ensure sterilisation

Conveyors – Covered conveyors and site clearing to ensure no contamination after sterilisation from plants, especially seeds

Storage and shiploading – Maintaining walls and roof to prevent access by plant products and pests including red crabs, vermin control, litter control

Continual quality control monitoring and auditing, written procedures, upgrading maintenance of machinery