

Australia Western Sahara Association (Victoria)

STATEMENT – 20 December 2007

A chance to escape blacklisting

AWSA asks Incitec Pivot to put on hold imports of Western Saharan phosphate illegally sold by Morocco

Most phosphate used in Australian superphosphate fertiliser comes from Western Sahara, a non-self-governing territory which both the International Court of Justice and the United Nations say has the right to self-determination. In international law such a country's natural resources cannot be taken without the consent of its local population, in this case, the Saharawi people. But it's Morocco, the occupying power, which is selling their phosphate rock from Bou Craa.

In October 2006 the Australian government, recognising there could be a problem, warned Australian companies about the risks of taking part in this trade and recommending that companies seek legal advice before importing material from Morocco sourced in Western Sahara. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/morocco/index.html>

On 3 December 2007 a Norwegian bank took Wesfarmers out of its investment portfolio on account of its fertiliser subsidiary CSBP, another Australian phosphate importer. "KLP excludes the fertiliser producer Wesfarmers as a result of illegal import of phosphate from Western Sahara. The area is occupied by Morocco, and in 2002 the UN declared all extraction of natural resources in West Sahara as illegal", an article states in the Norwegian business daily, *Dagens Næringsliv* on 3 December

The Australia Western Sahara Association is calling upon Australian fertiliser companies to consider their position in relation to international law. "If they wait until the vote of self-determination in Western Sahara has taken place, then they will know with whom they can deal over the purchase of phosphate and other natural resources", said Cate Lewis, secretary of the Victorian branch of AWSA.

The Saharawis living under the Moroccan occupation face daily human rights abuses, while those who fled to neighbouring Algeria have been living under harsh conditions in refugee camps for over 30 years. A military wall running the length of the country divides these people. We believe Australian farmers do not want to fertilise their land with the Saharawis' blood and tears. Instead they could use their muscle to help bring justice to the Saharawi people and inaugurate a legitimate trade in the natural resources of Western Sahara.

Incitec Pivot has the chance to avoid being blacklisted by ethical investment companies by putting further imports of the disputed phosphate on hold.

For further information

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