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INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

ISF: NATIONAL WORKSHOP THE FUTURE OF PHOSPHORUS



Institute for
**Sustainable
Futures**



UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

THE FUTURE OF PHOSPHORUS IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBAL FERTILISER SCARCITY

Background

All modern agricultural systems are dependent on continual inputs of phosphate fertilizers derived from phosphate rock. Yet phosphate rock is a non-renewable resource and current reserves may be depleted this century. The market price of phosphate rock has risen 700% in just 14 months. Unlike water, oil and even nitrogen, phosphorus receives little attention in the policy debate on securing the world's food production, yet without it we cannot produce enough food at today's production yields. There is no substitute for phosphorus in food production.

Australia has some of the world's most naturally phosphorus deficient soils and yet we invest heavily in phosphorus demanding export industries, like beef, wheat and wool. So Australia's agriculture depends heavily on the continuing importation of phosphate rock for fertilizers. At the same time phosphorus reaching our waterways from agricultural runoff and sewage effluent is causing algal blooms, and a significant proportion of phosphorus is lost in food waste.

A substantial gap exists in both the research to understand the whole phosphorus cycle through the food production and consumption system and policies to address the emerging global phosphorus scarcity problem.

The workshop

This workshop will present the latest global research on the phosphorus situation and the implications for Australia. A participatory discussion of potential future pathways to sustain Australia's use and management of phosphorus resources in light of global trends will follow.

Date: Friday 14 November 2008

Time: 9.00am - 3.00pm

Morning tea, lunch & afternoon tea will be provided

Venue: ISF board room, Level 11, 235 Jones Street

Map: <http://www.isf.uts.edu.au/contact/index.html>

RSVP: Lucy.Hall@uts.edu.au or phone 02 9514 4943 by Monday 1 September.

On registration you will receive a workshop package, including a discussion paper on the key science and policy issues for the Australian context, a list of other participants and a program for the workshop.

The workshop will be hosted by the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF), a research and consulting organisation at the University of Technology, Sydney. The workshop forms part of ongoing research being undertaken jointly by ISF and the Department of Water and Environmental Studies at Linköping University in Sweden.

The Global Phosphorus Research Initiative: www.phosphorusfutures.net

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