

Southern Africa – sulphuric acid production, upwards and onwards

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Southern Africa has rich mineral deposits which are being extracted at a rapidly growing rate. This extraction requires sulphuric acid -lots of it- and thus the production of sulphuric acid (and subsequent imports of sulphur) in Southern Africa has increased exponentially from the early 2000s and will continue to grow well into the 2020s - fuelled mostly by growth in copper and cobalt extraction in the central African Copperbelt.

This presentation will focus on the four main acid-producing countries – DRC, Zambia, South Africa and Namibia and will cover:

- Historical and projected sulphuric acid production until 2025
- Demand for sulphur as this will increase from current levels (1.2 M tpa) to over 2 M tpa
- Sulphur burners versus smelter production
- Movements of sulphuric acid between countries
A look at the fine balance between involuntary production and sulphur burning, surplus acid – where will it go?
- Logistics challenges in Africa as many of the countries are landlocked and far from a port – some sulphur is travelling nearly 3000 km to its consumption point.
As an example, logistics costs make up more than twice as much as the CFR cost of sulphur
Mostly road transport, rail systems dilapidated
Hard borders, border delays, queues
- Ports of entry – how to get sulphur to its final consumption spot.
A growing number of ports are being used
Some insight into the projected growth and the challenges involved