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1st International Conference on Ecological Importance of Solar Saltworks

Between 20-22 October 2006, on the beautiful island of Santorini in Greece, experts from all continents gathered to discuss the environmental importance of solar saltworks as integrated coastal ecosystems.

Although solar saltworks are industrial production sites of one of the most essential commodities, they also offer shelter to wildlife. The vast fields of shallow water support growth of great variety of species. Fish, plants, algae and birds, many of them protected, coexist in a unique environment, aiding salt production if managed wisely. The conference gave a chance to biologists, urban architects, ecologists and solar salt people to present their views in their areas of expertise.

More than a third of the world 250 million tones of salt are produced annually by natural evaporation of seawater. This process requires only a fraction of man made energy compared with thermal evaporation. Indeed, solar saltworks are the most efficient direct converters of solar energy into an inorganic product. Advanced technologies for biological management of solar saltworks, harvesting and salt processing facilitate high yield of solar salt of excellent quality.

More than 60% of salt produced worldwide is consumed by the chemical industry. There, the salt purity is essential. The use of pure salt for electrolysis reduces the cost of brine treatment and eliminates pollution. The absence of impurities and anti-caking additives in solar salt reduces the danger of damage to ion exchange membranes.

Proper understanding and management of the biological balance in solar saltworks was advocated by Prof. Steven Davis from the University of Florida. Roly Mottershead reported on the design of the world largest solar saltworks, to be constructed at Yannarie in Western Australia, to safeguard the natural environment. Dr. S. Sundaresan, Salt Commissioner, presented the solar salt industry of India as the world third largest producer. Vladimir M. Sedivy, the founder and President of Salt Partners, showed on an example of Namibian saltworks how elimination of biological disturbances improves solar salt yield and quality.

Flamingos in solar saltworks Courtesy of Photomedia Group

Contributions by participants from Italy, Greece and Germany presented environmental situation of several European solar saltworks. Other papers dealt with solar saltworks in the USA, Mexico, Egypt, Tunisia, Ghana, Israel and China (www.gnest.org).

Solar saltworks hosting flamingos are not only beautiful. These wetlands also contribute towards the shift of the environmental balance in the direction of higher overall economical and ecological benefits.

Salt Partners is an independent firm of salt consultants and engineering contractors, active in the field of salt production, salt processing and hypersaline biotechnology. Salt Partners' world-wide reputation is based on more than 30 years of experience gained in salt projects implemented around the world.

The advanced HYDROSAL® technology of Salt Partners finds application in caustic/chlorine and soda ash plants, in salt and potash mining operations, in solar saltworks and in production of refined salt for human consumption.

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Participants at the Santorini Conference Centre