



Price Briefing: Week 22 – Feldspar, fluorspar, zircon

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Sale of acidspar at \$600/tonne, smuggling continues into China

Prices for **feldspar** used in China's ceramics industry have **increased significantly** over the last three years, Chinese ceramics producers told **IM** at trade fair Ceramics China 2011 in Guangzhou.

Cao Xinling, general manager at Zibo Fuxing Ceramic Pigment & Glaze Co. Ltd, a Chinese glaze and pigment producer, revealed to **IM** that feldspar prices started to increase steadily, particularly in China, since 2008-2009.

Another Chinese feldspar producer said he believed that prices will continue to increase in China during the next year owing to the growing demand added to an increase in production costs.

A **recent sale** of Chinese chemical grade **fluorspar** (acidspar) has taken place at \$600/tonne (FOB China) highlighting the ongoing strong global demand for the mineral, an established producer of fluorspar has told **IM**.

"We understand that it was only a one-off transaction for a small volume and that since then prices have come off this high but are now at around \$550/tonne," he said.

"We expect prices to climb to \$600/tonne again in the next quarter," he added.

High fluorspar prices within China have been supported by the country's growing domestic consumption of refrigerants over the long term, as well as an ongoing drive by the Chinese government to protect domestic mineral reserves and to cut down on environmental pollution.

Several market sources have spoken to **IM** this week about **zircon** prices. The conclusion? Market **prices** are expected to increase – and there may be no end in sight.

Supply has tightened primarily because demand from China has increased. Also, China has clamped down on poor practise in zircon processing plants, which has tightened the market further.

Instances of smuggling are still widespread, according to market sources. One trader said that the **trade ban** between Vietnam and China has been "largely ignored."

Tighter supply could be one of the reasons Cristal Global is **increasing prices** on all of its **rutile** and **titanium dioxide (TiO₂)** products sold in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Asia Pacific sub regions.

The price increases, which will come into effect on 1 July, affect all of the company's *amatase* and rutile *Tiona* products as well as all TiO₂ products, Cristal emphasised.