

Non-Renewable Resources Energy Conference - where to from here??

On Thursday 12 March at the Glen Hove Conferencing Centre in Johannesburg the Fossil Fuel Foundation is hosting the '**Non-Renewable Resources Energy Conference.**'

Southern Africa, especially Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique, has large resources of bituminous and sub-bituminous coal. Coal is found in significant volumes in Tanzania as well as in Kenya, Madagascar and Zimbabwe and in smaller deposits in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and Malawi.

South Africa and Mozambique are presently the largest exporters from the region, selling into the energy-hungry Asian thermal and coking coal markets, respectively.

What are the impacts of mining coal? Who benefits from it and who pays the price?

Technology is playing an ever-increasing role in power generation. The new Circulating Fluidised Bed Technology presents the opportunity for the typically low grade run-of-mine coals and discard products to be added to the energy mix in the region. Discard coals can be beneficial to existing and new power projects as they meet logistics and environmental considerations thus attracting legislators and investors alike. Low grade coal and discard coal power projects could contribute to the solution in these power constrained times.

Coal still sits on the energy throne and will continue to do so until it is no longer economically viable. However mining domestic coal is often only economically viable where there is a high grade primary export product to add value. Mining followed by beneficiation to produce such export grade coal often allows for the production of a lower grade 'middlings' product and it is this that is suitable for much needed domestic electricity generation.

So the debate rages on – export primary products or process high-value secondary products for export?

Yet even the debate is not that simple. Add a few soul searching questions and the issue becomes decidedly complex. A cat's cradle indeed! South African coal with the help of Eskom keeps the lights burning in southern Botswana, while coal from northern Botswana and the Botswana Power Corporation feed power back into the SA grid with

Botswana having a nominal net surplus. Coking coal from Zimbabwe and Mozambique is sent to SA and thermal coal from Zimbabwe is sent to Zambia and the DRC.

Is coal being exploited in the best way possible? And best for whom: the mining companies and their shareholders, the national governments and their treasuries, or the surrounding communities? Is the industry being used to drive economic growth and socio-economic development for the citizens of these coal mining countries or is it just lining someone's pockets? What is the cost of the degradation of the surrounding natural environment and is this acceptable when weighed against the jobs created, the income received and the products produced?

In keeping with the mission of the Fossil Fuel Foundation to educate and inform, this thought provoking event seeks to provide a forum for all interested parties to develop the coal resources of Southern Africa in the most innovative, technically suitable, cost effective and environmentally sound manner.

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All wishing to attend this conference should contact the conference secretariat:

RCA Conference Organisers: robbie@rca.co.za
events@rca.co.za