

Precipitated Calcium Carbonate Production in Nigeria; the Feasibility Report

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Abstracts

Nigeria is blessed with abundant mineral resources, which are from time immemorial formed the backbone of the nation's economic and industrial development aspirations. Prior to independence, the nation's mineral raw material resources contributed immensely to the export earnings of the nation.

For over three decades, the Country has continued to depend entirely on oil for her revenue and the volatile nature of the oil market has made it imperative for us to diversify the mono-product economy through exploitation and processing of our abundant solid mineral resources. The clamour for resource control being advocated by states with petroleum resources in their domain makes it imperative for us to develop, exploit, process and utilize our solid minerals – particularly Non-metallic Minerals as every part of this country is blessed with one or more solid mineral that could yield substantial revenue for sustainable development.

Exploitation of the Non-metallic Minerals has not attained the desired level, mainly because of the various constraints associated with their exploitation, development and processing for utilization. Many of the non-metallic minerals, which are vital to the industrial take off of the country, have been found in commercial quantities within the country.

They include limestone, dolomite, marble, kaolin, barite, diatomite, feldspar, quartz and silica sands, gypsum, talc, silimanite, kyanite, phosphate, salt and bentonite.

This report seeks to examine the financial viability or otherwise of producing precipitated calcium carbonate {PCC} from limestone from limestone and other calcium carbonate.

Precipitated Calcium Carbonate is the same with Ground Calcium Carbonate (GCC) in chemical composition but PCC is purer than the limestone from which it is made, and is lower in silica and lead. PCC's shape and size are different from that of GCC. GCC is seen to be irregularly rhombohedral in shape under high magnification whereas PCC's crystal shape depends on the product, and the particles are more uniform and regular in shape. PCC is available in numerous crystal morphologies and sizes, which can be tailored to optimize performance in a specific application.

PCC is a versatile additive for use in a wide range of plastic and elastomeric applications. Its regular and controlled crystalline shape and ultrafine particle size, together with the hydrophobic surface coating, combine to the benefit of both polymer processing and subsequent physical properties.

The importance of PCC cannot be overemphasized. In paints, PCC's unique particle size shapes improve capacity and allow reductions in titanium dioxide levels. It has versatile application such as in emulsion paints, architectural finishes, traffic paint, industrial primers, undercoats in rubbers. It is widely used in high value rubber products.

In health applications, PCC is an effective acid neutralizer and it enables the formulation of high dosage calcium supplements and multi-vitamin/mineral tablets. In paper industry, PCC is well established as a filler and coating pigment for premium quality paper products. PCC enhances optical properties and print characteristics of paper products, improves paper machine productivity. The demand for precipitated calcium carbonate is quite high in Nigeria and the raw material is also available in commercial quantity.

Because of the numerous uses of precipitated calcium carbonate {PCC}, there is steady and increasing demand for the product. The PPC requirement in Nigeria is met mainly through importation despite the abundance raw material for its local production.

The demand is largely found in the paper, food, paint, pharmaceutical & personal care, nutritional supplements and plastics industries. In paper coating, precipitated calcium carbonate is used in combination with kaolin. The paper industries also use precipitated calcium carbonate as filler.

Some of the producers and dealers of hydrated lime in Nigeria includes Istabaraqim Nigeria Limited, Rovercom Nigeria Limited, The freedom group and Bradford Technologies Limited.

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