

OVERVIEW OF THE FELDSPAR INDUSTRY IN BRAZIL

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Feldspar is a source of K_2O , Na_2O and Al_2O_3 , and is used as flux in ceramics and glass manufacturing. In Brazil, premium grade (high K and low Fe) feldspar is expensive, due to high costs of production and transport, and its use is restricted to glass, frits, glazes and other few industries. As a source of Al_2O_3 for container glasses, it is sometimes substituted by synthetic alumina (from Bayer process). In ceramic bodies, feldspar-rich rocks or other mineral or rocks, such as granitoids, fonolites, phyllites, illitic clays and others commonly replace feldspar. The present production of processed feldspar is around 180,000 tpa, in spite of the much bigger potential of Brazilian geologic environment. This production is based on small pegmatite bodies, far from the industrial centers and this, sometimes, lead the consumers to import feldspar from foreigner suppliers such as The United States. On the other hand, Brazilian ceramic tile industry is developing fast, including their new porcelaineized products. This sector demands more and more low-Fe feldspar and substitute materials, at international prices. In the next future the feldspar demand, only for porcelain stone tile, will be greater than the present domestic supply. This paper shows the balance between the domestic feldspar production and demand, and points out the geological potential of Brazil, and presents the current exploration projects.