

# NEWS REVIEW

NEW AG INTERNATIONAL

## SQM to increase Potassium Nitrate capacities by 50%

■ SQM recently announced that it will implement a series of projects to increase its speciality fertilizers and iodine production in Chile. The first stage of these projects, scheduled to last three years, involves approximately \$145 million and comprises -among others - a new potassium nitrate plant at Nueva Victoria that will use the nitrate salts deriving from the increased iodine production, and the construction of a new potassium Nitrate granular facility that will complement existing prilling plants. This granulation facility will also allow SQM to increase its production capacity and develop new speciality blends.

Altogether, SQM expects in the first stage to increase its global Potassium Nitrate and iodine production capacity by about 30%. For Potassium Nitrate, the increase will be bigger: it is understood that by 2007, the production capacity will go up to about 900,000 mt versus about 600,000 mt today.

## 21 Actions to boost Organic Farming in the European Union

■ The European Commission has recently adopted the "European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming". Its objective is to facilitate the ongoing development of organic farming in the EU. The Commission puts forward a list of 21 concrete policy measures to be implemented, such as improving information about organic farming, streamlining public support via rural development, improving production standards or strengthening research. This plan comes in response to a rapid increase in the number of farmers producing organically and to a strong demand from consumers during the

last years. It is based on extensive consultations with Member States and stakeholders including an online consultation in 2003, a hearing in January 2004, and meetings with Member States and stakeholder groups. Commenting on the Action Plan, Franz Fischler, Commissioner for Agriculture, said: "Promoting environmentally friendly quality products is one major objective of the new, reformed Common Agricultural Policy. This is why we want to boost organic farming by stepping up information for consumers, strengthening the control system and improving research".

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## IA Education Foundation Launches Website

■ The USA based Irrigation Association Education Foundation (IAEF) launched its website at [www.iaef.org](http://www.iaef.org) earlier in the summer. The site was created to promote awareness of the irrigation industry to students and instructors, while allowing an area for the industry to learn which schools graduate students who have advanced knowledge of irrigation. The site has three main sections: students, faculty and industry. The student area contains a school directory, careers in irrigation, professional profiles, job and internship postings and industry links. The faculty area has an image library, foundation resources and curriculum

and Faculty Academy. The industry section includes a listing of board members and donor information. The vision of the IAEF is to improve the quality of professionals entering into the irrigation industry through advanced educational opportunities. IAEF recruits universities, colleges and technical schools throughout North America to create a network of resources for the classroom. IAEF offers curriculum assistance, textbooks instructor training and lab aides to supplement existing programs, or create new courses in both Turf/Landscape and Agricultural irrigation.