

CRONICAS

A member of O.P.I. (Internal Press Organization)

Year XXVIII N° 8683 Tuesday 11th August 209

DATA CONTRIBUTED YESTERDAY COULD BE SUBMITTED NEXT MONTH BEFORE THE HAGUE'S COURT

BOTNIA'S FOLLOW UP COMMISSION ASSURES THAT THE COMPANY HAS HAD A GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Botnia has an excellent environmental performance according to the latest data of the company's Follow-Up Commission submitted yesterday.

Both the emissions as the air and water quality show very good parameters, something that for the Executive Power constitutes an excellent evidence to present the coming month at The Hague's Court. This Follow-Up Commission is integrated by representatives from the Company itself, the Ministries of the Environment, Industry, Public Health and Foreign Affairs; and also with the participation of the Municipalities and Departmental Councils of the Rio Negro and Soriano Departments, as well as outstanding citizens from the communities, industry, commerce and unions of the district.

The data submitted correspond to the November 2008 – May 2009 period, during which five inspections and two audits were carried out, and also during this period the company's production represented 58% of the annual production. The control carried out involves more than 30 parameters in liquid effluents, more than 10 in gaseous emissions and more than 15 on liquid waste.

This is the third time that the work of the Commission has been submitted since February 2007 and, according to the Minister of the Environment, Carlos Colacca, the results shown are excellent. "The report includes the status of all the parameters that are being monitored, which are obviously many, with parameters of different substances that measure the quality of both the air as the water in the entire area surrounding the plant. The results are of totally acceptable values and, in some cases, very acceptable when compared to other similar projects. Botnia is having an excellent performance in Uruguay", he stated.

The report states that the environmental performance of the plant continues complying with the defined standards, authorisations and criteria; having verified a reduction in the loads discharged of relevant environmental parameters such as nitrogen or phosphorous, and confirming an improved performance during the last quarter with respect to the first year of operations.

With regard to air quality, the concentrations of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ozone and TRS, the sulphur gases that are responsible for foul odour events, were monitored.

These parameters are monitored at two fixed stations; one located between Fray Bentos and Botnia's plant, and the other one at the Las Cañas beach resort, and a third mobile station for the specific monitoring of gases.

The official report verified that the activity of Botnia did not generate variations in the air quality, and that the company complied during its third quarter (of operations) with the quality standards set in the prior environmental authorization.

With respect to the water quality, which is controlled through monitoring more than 65 parameters, it was established that the variables more strongly associated with Botnia's plant continue to be well below the established limits and in not one of the three inspections carried out dioxins' values over the detection limits were found.

In connection with foul odours in Gualeguaychu and Fray Bentos and the algae blooms in the River Uruguay between January and February this year, Colacce assured that these are normal episodes: "These episodes were totally foreseen for this type of production. These are very specific events that are scant, that were fully foreseen, and for all the forecasts that have to do with the plant's operations. That's all there is. Maybe some isolated event that generates some discomfort but it's nothing more than that".

T

he Minister insisted on emphasising that in some aspects the arrival of Botnia improved the environmental management of the region, as collecting the wastewaters of Fray Bentos that are later on completely treated in Botnia's facilities, something that improves the water quality of the River Uruguay.

There is a line partially missing and illegible and the text continues... Fernandez underlined the transparency in the activities of the Commission that acted without the intention of blocking the new project, but neither did it grant any concession, scrupulously enforcing the norms in force. For the Minister, the end result makes evident what was always upheld by Uruguay. "That is why we feel satisfied with the results obtained, satisfied because we have the material evidence that Botnia's plant does not produce any deceptive effect from the environmental standpoint and this one will be the last monitoring meeting to be held before the hearings before The International Court of Justice that will take place in The Hague", he pointed out.

Fernandez assured that these data represent a great certitude for the next instances at the Penal International Court. "We go with full faith, with the conviction of having done all things necessary and, of course, we hope that the outcome will be fully favourable for the interests of our country", he asserted. The hearings will take place between the last fortnight of September until 3rd October.