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New Production Process Slashes Potassium Ferrate Price

4:46 PM EDT | April 12, 2010 | Rebecca Coons

Battelle (Columbus, OH) and start-up firm Ferratec (St. Louis MO) say they have developed a manufacturing process that slashes the cost of potassium ferrate from about \$100/gram to as low as \$2/gram in research quantities. The potassium ferrate, which is distributed by GFS Chemicals (Powell, OH), is now available in kilogram quantities after scale-up work done by Ferratec, Battelle, electrochemical technology firm Electrosynthesis (Lancaster, N.Y.), and engineering firm Noram (Vancouver, BC) on process technology licensed from Battelle, Ferratec says.

Ferratec is able to produce pilot-scale quantities of kilograms of the salt per day, but determining the capacity of a commercial-scale project will depend on how quickly markets adopt the new chemistry, says Andy Wolter, CEO at Ferratec. "Would there be a market for hundreds of lbs/day? Absolutely," Wolter says. "But application development has to catch up now that research material is affordable." The "holy grail" of applications is the multi-billion dollar municipal water and wastewater treatment sector, but that is a highly commoditized market still out of reach, even at potassium ferrate prices of \$2/gram.

"But long before we get to price points competitive with chlorine or permanganate, [potassium ferrate] can be used as an oxidizer or biocide," he adds. Military, Homeland Security and Superfund decontamination applications, pharmaceuticals, and use as a replacement for hexavalent chromium in conversion coatings are a few of the applications.

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