



## Environmental Technology in the KSA - Opportunities for UK Ltd.

By Noel O'Donnell

Saudi Envirotech 97 - The International Exhibition and Conference for Environmental Technology will take place 21-25 September 1997. The launch of this event is a recognition of the potential that exists in Saudi Arabia to develop business in this sector. The UK which has a thriving Environmental technology sector should be one of the beneficiaries.

Saudi Arabia is by some distance, the largest market in the Gulf Region. It currently has a population of 18 million which is expected to grow to 20 million by the year 2000. Half of the population is under the age of 16. This rapid population growth when added to Saudi Arabia's industrial development has created a number of environmental issues which need to be addressed in the next few years.

The World Bank in a recent report estimated that some \$10 billion would need to be invested in the Environmental Technology sector in The Arab World and this naturally will provide opportunities for UK Exporters.

In Saudi Arabia the specific requirements include:

### (i) Provision of drinking water

As the large sections of the population enter the age of household formation, it is estimated that in Riyadh alone they will need to build 350,000 new homes. There is an urgent requirement therefore to update the already overstretched existing drinking water infrastructure to cope with this additional demand. The Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC) has already committed itself to spending over

15 billion Saudi Riyals in this area.

### (ii) Sewage

As new homes are built then the existing Sewage infrastructure will need replacement and updating. In Jeddah, for example, the sewage treatment plants that serve the city are operating at 141% of their capacity. This has led to the construction of nearly 30 unregulated private sewage outflows along the coastline. This is in an area where much of the cities recreational activities take place.

### (iii) Ground water

Ground water levels are rising throughout the major cities. In Jeddah the ground water level is rising at a rate of 0.5m<sup>3</sup> per year. This is creating a series of problems including flooding of basements, deterioration of building foundations, offensive smells mosquitoes and other health hazards. The disposal of sewage is responsible for more than 80% of this rise in the ground water level.

### (iv) Solid Waste disposal

Industrial, agricultural and consumer waste levels continue to rise. Saudi Arabia has the worlds highest per capita waste volume averaging 2.2 kg daily. This is double the European average and slightly higher than the American Average. Recycling is a relatively new concept in Saudi Arabia and some small scale recycling ventures have started in the Kingdom. It is estimated that 45% of this solid waste could be recycled. UK companies have particular expertise in this sector.

### (v) Air pollution

The transportation sector is the main source of air pollution although air emissions from industry are creating increasing concern. There are plans to introduce lead free petrol, but so far no timetable has been implemented. The Government has also ordered that major industrial projects should conform with international standards in terms of limiting emissions. At present however there is little monitoring or enforcement.

### Saudi Governmental Support and initiatives to develop the Environmental sector.

The sixth five year development plan (1995-2000) highlights some of the Governments concerns on the Environment. The Saudi Government is expected to launch a number of environmental initiatives including an Environmental Protection Programme and an Environmental awareness programme aimed at the public.

The Saudi Government has clearly stated its goals in relation to the environment in the sixth year development plan. These goals include:

- "using the most advanced and environmentally sound technology in the field of industrial development to avoid pollution"
- "the issuing of a national system for environmental impact assessments."

See **Environmental Opportunities** on Page 22