



trading faces

Cofermin Rohstoffe GmbH

Emerging from the ashes of the Frank & Schulte Group, Cofermin Rohstoffe GmbH has swiftly carved a niche for itself in the new generation of traders, with a particular focus on central Europe and the CIS.

Background & business summary

Headquartered in Essen, Cofermin, established on 1 September 2000, is mainly active in the processing, marketing, distribution, and trading of ores and minerals for a number of markets including: foundry, steel, refractories, building materials, metal scrap, coal, mineral processing, ceramics, glass, feedstuff and fertiliser, welding, and waterjet cutting.

The company employs over 25 people, 20 of whom are former employees (including two former managing directors) of the Frank & Schulte Group. This former division of Stinnes AG, Germany was one of the dominant raw material trading groups in the world in the 1990s. Cofermin's four managing partners were part of the senior management at Frank & Schulte GmbH: **Ralf Ossen**, **Bernhard Krüger**, **Dr Pawel Golak**, and **Tim Geldmacher**.

Cofermin runs offices in Moscow, Russia, Katowice, Poland, and Tianjin, China. Next to the continental European markets, the company concentrates on the growing economies of Eastern Europe. With a staff of five (former F&S Group employees), Cofermin China in Tianjin is mainly responsible for marketing products into the Chinese refractory, steel, and foundry industries and assists in sourcing Chinese raw materials.

Cofermin's agencies and representations for central Europe include: Andalusite Resources, South Africa (andalusite); BMH, Poland (cenospheres); Hafsil, Norway (FeSi15); Ibiden/Itochu, Japan (ferro silicon nitride); Kimony, South Africa (magnetite); Nanchuan, China (bauxite – construction); Nippon Chemical Industrial, Japan (chromoxide green); Samancor/Kermas, UK (chromite); Titania AS, Norway (magnetite/ilmenite); UBE Material Industries, Japan (seawater magnesia); Volnogorsk State Mining & Metallurgical Plant, Ukraine (zircon/rutile).

Agencies and representations for the CIS include: Almatix, Germany (speciality aluminas); Damrec, France (andalusite); ESK, Germany (silicon carbide); Heidelberger Calcium Aluminates, Germany (alumina cements); Hexion Speciality Chemicals, Germany (phenolic resins); Kyanite Mining, USA, (kyanite/mullite); Premier Periclase, UK (seawater magnesia); Rütgers Chemicals, Germany (binder additives).

Describe your company's role and position?

At Cofermin, we have an in-depth knowledge of customer industries and their individual characteristics. The company is known to be a reliable distribution channel for producers and principals, acting as the extended arm of our principals. We focus on marketing and distribution to end consumers with the emphasis centring on high quality, specialist, niche products.

What plans do you have for future developments?

We are constantly growing organically. We are actively looking to add-on in areas within the field of raw materials in which we



Ralf Ossen,
Managing Partner



Bernhard Krüger,
Managing Partner



Dr. Pawel Golak,
Managing Partner



Tim Geldmacher,
Managing Partner

currently have no participation. We would be most interested to form a partnership with a company, or an individual, interested in assuming some entrepreneurial responsibility themselves.

What chief factors have impacted the market and why?

Without a doubt, the continuing strong growth of the Chinese economy has been and continues to be the most influential factor. Strong internal demand caused a severe shortage for some of the Chinese raw materials, as well as turmoil in inland and ocean logistics. This also caused a change in the market scenario for raw materials that China needs to import. Another challenging factor is the continuing concentration of raw material demand caused by multinational companies that continue to grow by acquisition. Cofermin reacts to this challenge by continuously developing niche and added value products for those customers and by moving to markets and territories with growth potential.

How do you view the role of the "trader"?

These past few years have proven that the role of the trader is still an important one when it comes to a reliable and consistent supply of raw material. If it was not for the traders, many industries and consumers would have been in big trouble. Many of our customers have appreciated the role we played during these difficult times.

Again, we are trying to constantly add value to our products and services. We are moving into markets where the traditional functions of a trader are very much required. Last but not least, an important role is still the sourcing and development of alternative supply sources. Over the past few years, we have moved more and more into the area of secondary raw materials, a very promising business.

What are the main challenges in sourcing new materials?

The sourcing of a new and/or alternative raw material is always a challenge because one raw material is never like another. Unless it is a time of severe shortage for a specific product, it takes a lot of time to introduce a product since it always represents a certain risk for the customer to initiate a change. However, these past few years have shown many users of raw materials just how important alternatives can become.

What do you think of "direct sourcing"?

There is a natural life cycle for most products, no matter which industry you look at. Markets are constantly changing and everything is getting more transparent in our global market. Why should this be any different in our field? Cofermin reacts to this by developing businesses with more functions and by moving into areas with growth potential, both in terms of industry as well as geographically. In doing so, we never lose our traditional markets out of sight. They are still and will continue to be very important to us.

Which countries/regions are potential growth markets?

As one can see from the list of world renowned producers we represent, Cofermin has a clear focus on Eastern Europe, Russia, and Ukraine in particular.

