## Factsheet on Asbestos and Asbestos-Related Diseases

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<th>54. South Africa’s export trade in asbestos: demise of an industry</th>
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### Introduction

#### Asian context

Asian countries are major consumers of asbestos in which asbestos-related diseases are expected to increase accordingly in the near future.

#### Critical appraisal

Data on asbestos trade by South Africa were analyzed. The export trade has changed significantly since 1960 from being dominantly to European countries to being directed in recent years to the Far East, in particular Japan, South Korea and Thailand.

#### Unique keywords

Asbestos export, South Africa

### Abstract

Background: South Africa’s export of each of its three types of asbestos, crocidolite, amosite, and chrysotile, and the total amounts to 84 countries in metric tons is examined over a 24-year period, 1980-2003.

Methods: For convenience, the countries are divided into nine world regional groups, Europe, Eastern Europe, North America with the Caribbean, South America, Africa, Middle East, Far East, South Asia, and Oceania.

Results: The three greatest importing countries of total asbestos in metric tons were all in the Far East region, ranging from Japan, South Korea to Thailand, and followed by USA and Italy. All exports to all countries diminished steadily as the South African trade came virtually to an end by 2003, due to ever increasing international pressure.

Conclusion: The export trade has changed significantly since 1960 from being dominantly to European countries to being directed in recent years to the Far East, with serious implications for asbestos-related ill-health in those countries.
South Africa exported three types of asbestos, crocidolite (890,974 metric tons), amosite (422,945 metric tons) and chrysotile (1,568,928 metric tons) to 84 countries over the 24-year period, 1980-2003.

Europe as the major region of import in the earlier period has been replaced by countries of the Far East Region in the more recent period.

The three greatest importing countries of total asbestos in metric tons were all in the Far East region, ranging from Japan (1,102,399 metric tons), South Korea (468,094 metric tons) to Thailand (116,457 metric tons). Chrysotile was the dominant asbestos type and crocidolite was at less than one-tenth of the total import over the period 1980-2003.

Whilst the peak of total export had been reached in 1975, the percentage of chrysotile had always been the highest of any single fiber; 47% in 1960, 50% in 1975, and 54% over the period 1980-2003 and over the same dates crocidolite export had gone from 47% to 24% to 31%.