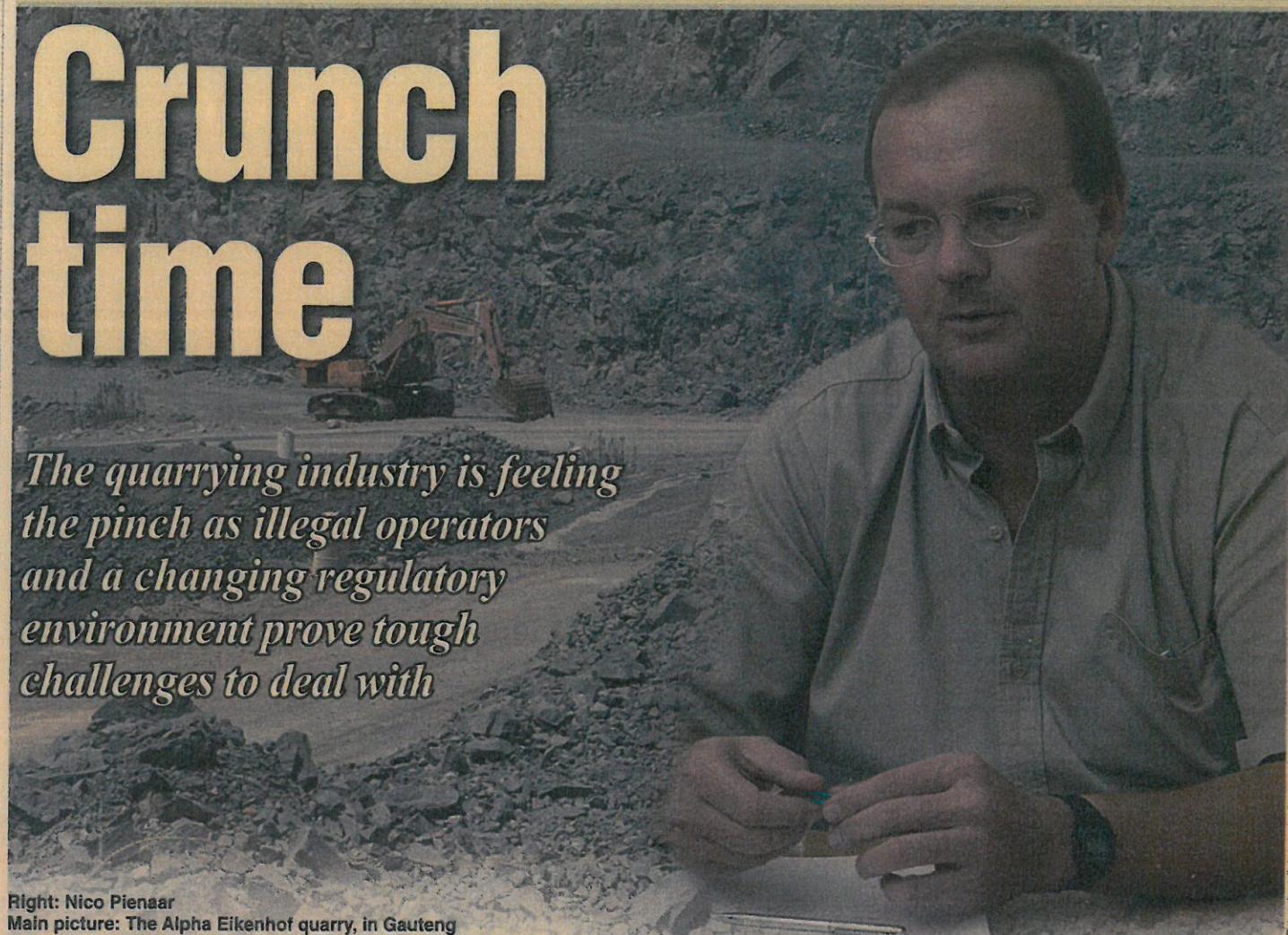


# QUARRYING

Compiled by Zeena Isaacs

## Crunch time

*The quarrying industry is feeling the pinch as illegal operators and a changing regulatory environment prove tough challenges to deal with*



Right: Nico Pienaar  
Main picture: The Alpha Eikenhof quarry, in Gauteng

**Zeena Isaacs**  
Features Reporter

The quarry industry is a tough industry to be involved in, says Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of South Africa (Aspasa) director **Nico Pienaar**.

"Big mining is cutting jobs due to the fall in the rand. The aggregate and sand mining industry, which Aspasa represents, is also feeling the pressure," he explains.

In the mining industry in South Africa there are laws developing that apply to all mining.

"Aspasa members have to abide by the same laws and rules that apply to big mining houses, which causes a problem," Pienaar says.

He explains that, on the one hand, the rules that apply to the mining

industry are relevant to the quarry industry.

On the other hand, the illegal operators, of whom there are many, do not abide by these rules.

Pienaar says this causes a problem in that the requirements are strict, but their regulation is insufficient.

"We seem to have two sets of rules, and it seems that job creation is often used as an excuse by staff in the regulator's office for not taking action," says Pienaar.

He adds that the issue of small-scale operators is also a problem.

Small-scale operations present several challenges, such as health and safety problems, severe environmental degradation, loss of government revenues, and tainting the reputation of the quarrying industry as a whole.

"Small-scale mining requires serious government intervention in order to solve the problem," says Pienaar.

He adds that the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) is currently working on the problem.

However, this is being done without consulting commercial stakeholders in the industry, such as Aspasa, which has expertise in the industry that could be of value.

Pienaar adds that Aspasa has developed two programmes over the last few years to ensure that its members are seen as responsible South African citizens, and this information has assisted the quarry industry to a great extent.

These programmes are the About Face environmental programme and the Initiating Safety and Health

Education programme.

"The About Face programme deals with environmental issues at quarries, and is audited by external auditors.

"The focus of the programme is to ensure legal compliance on broad environmental legislation and other issues by quarry owners, although it is not compulsory at present," says Pienaar.

He adds that one of the results of small-scale quarrying is that many legal quarry owners become sceptics, with the standpoint that, if illegal operations do not adhere to the regulations, there is no reasons for them to do so.

According to Pienaar, the DME should ensure that all quarries operate on the same level of legal compliance.

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