

July 3, 2006

NEWS RELEASE

**Taiyo Nippon Sanso acquires mid-sized
U.S. industrial gas manufacturer Linweld Inc.**

We hereby announce that the Company has signed a basic agreement to begin procedures necessary for acquisition of all stock of Linweld Inc., which is engaged in the manufacture and marketing of industrial gases and other products in the midwestern United States. The Company will make the acquisition through its wholly owned U.S. subsidiary Matheson Tri-Gas, Inc. After completion of due diligence procedures, the acquisition of shares is scheduled to be completed by the end of August.

Purpose of the Acquisition

Matheson Tri-Gas operates mainly in Texas, and is also active in a wide belt of the South, Southeast, and West, from Florida to California. By acquiring Linweld, a medium-sized industrial gas manufacturer with a high market share in the Midwest (Nebraska, a state which promises long-term growth, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and South Dakota), it aims to further expand and strengthen its U.S. business and ensure sustained growth in earnings.

Linweld Inc.

Linweld is a medium-sized industrial gas manufacturer which has a high market share in the midwestern United States.

Trade name: Linweld Inc.

Address: 2900 South 70th Street, Suite 400, Lincoln, NE 68506

Established: 1945 (Lincoln, Nebraska)

Area of operations: U.S. Midwest

It has 27 sales and service locations in six states (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota)

Production facility: Waverley, Nebraska (air separation plant: 1; liquefied oxygen: approximately 2,000 m³ per hour; liquefied nitrogen: approximately 6,000 m³ per hour)

Number of employees: approximately 460

Sales: approximately \$149 million (estimate for the fiscal yearended June 30, 2006)

Future Business Plans

We aim to build an air separation plant at new location and produce industrial gases (oxygen, nitrogen, argon) in-house instead of purchasing gas products sourced in part from outside the company. We also aim to further expand Linweld's gas business by aggressively expanding sales of products such as pure gases, standard gases, and compound gases.