

12 Countries That Produce The Most Lithium

In this piece, we will take a look at the 12 countries that produce the most lithium. For more countries, head on over to [5 Countries That Produce The Most Lithium](#).

Lithium is shaping up to be one of the most important materials for the modern-day world. Alongside silicon, which is used in semiconductor fabrication, this highly volatile metal is central for battery production. Major companies like Livent Corporation (NYSE:LTHM), Sociedad Quimica y Minera (NYSE:SQM), and Albemarle Corporation (NYSE:ALB) are in the limelight due to their lithium battery operations. These batteries are used in every handheld and portable gadget or device, and more importantly, they are also used in most electric vehicles. The electric vehicle industry is one of the fastest growing industries right now, due to consumer and government interest. This growth is also translating into more investment into lithium production; investment so crucial that some companies often choose to keep their production statistics confidential for the fear of losing potential competitive edges.

Moving towards the lithium mining industry, a report from Emergen Research believes that the industry was worth \$343 million last year, and from then until 2030, it will grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6% to sit at \$584 million at the end of the forecast period. The firm outlines that Asia Pacific held the highest share of the lithium market in 2021, particularly due to the dominance of Australia whose output is estimated to rise by a whopping 24.5% this year to sit at 68.5 kilotons. The country will continue this growth trend, with a CAGR of more than twice the overall market by 2026. Emergen Research believes that the Australian CAGR will sit at 14.2% until 2026 when it will have grown its lithium output to 116.24 kilotons.

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Our Methodology

Researching lithium production by countries is a tedious task since data for some is not regularly updated, and mining does not occur in a lot of countries. For the purposes of this piece, data for production in 2019 and 2021 from the U.S. Geological Survey has been relied upon. In instances where production has not started, or data has been withheld, estimates of current mine output and planned output have been used.

Story continues

12. Canada

Estimated Annual Lithium Production in Tons: 15

Canada is a North American country that shares a land border with the United States. Mining is a central part of the Canadian economy, and it produces a wide variety of materials such as iron, potash, copper, niobium, uranium, and gold. There are currently no operational lithium mines in Canada. However, some projects are in their final feasibility stages. Out of these, the Rose Lithium-Tantalum mine in Quebec is estimated to have an operational lithium production of 15 tons once it starts operations according to a June 2022 feasibility study. This mine cleared a major hurdle in November 2022, when the Quebec government gave it the environmental go-ahead.

11. Federal Republic of Nigeria

Annual Lithium Production in 2019 in Tons: 50

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is an African nation that is one of the most prosperous countries on the continent. It is rich in petroleum resources, but despite exporting vast amounts of crude oil, the fact that it has to import petroleum derivatives makes it a net importer. The Federal Republic of Nigeria did not produce any lithium in 2020 and 2021; however, its lithium output stood at 50 tons in 2019 - the same year in which it was discovered. Nigeria's mining industry is underdeveloped due to its focus on oil exploration. Its government made headlines earlier this year when turned down an offer from Tesla to mine lithium in the country. The reason for the rejection, according to official sources, was that Nigeria also wanted Tesla to build a battery manufacturing plant in the country as well, which Tesla refused.

Major companies like Livent Corporation (NYSE:LTHM), Sociedad Quimica y Minera (NYSE:SQM), and Albemarle Corporation (NYSE:ALB) can benefit from the increasing lithium production in Africa in the future.

10. Republic of Namibia

Annual Lithium Production in Tons in 2018: 500

The Republic of Namibia is a South African country that touches the Atlantic ocean. The country mines uranium, gold, marble, copper, zinc, and tin. Data for its lithium production remains sparse, and the only estimate comes from the US Geological Survey's 2018 global lithium production report that outlined that Namibia had produced 500 metric tons of lithium. However, there is some production going on in the country, as evidenced by its restoration of Chinese production licenses earlier this year.

9. Plurinational State of Bolivia

Annual Lithium Production in Tons in 2021: 540

The Plurinational State of Bolivia is a South American landlocked country that declared independence from Spain in 1825. Its economy is worth \$98 billion with a GDP per

capita of \$7,790. Mining is a major sector of the Bolivian economy, with the country producing silver, antimony, lead, gold, tin, boron, and tungsten. Bolivia also has the largest mineral reserves in the world, which totaled a massive 21 million tons as of 2021 and S&P Global estimates these to be even higher at 39 million tons. While the USGS does not list the country's lithium production, according to the Bolivian state-owned lithium company Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos, it was 540 tons in 2021.

8. Portuguese Republic

Annual Lithium Production in 2021 in Tons: 900

The Portuguese Republic is the oldest state in Europe which traces its history back to prehistoric times some 1.2 million years ago. It was also one of the first empires in global history, predating those of Britain, Spain, and France. The country is Europe's largest lithium producer. It produced 900 tons of lithium last year, but all of its output is for the ceramics industry instead of battery manufacturing. Portugal's lithium reserves are estimated to sit at 60,000 tons and it is also evaluating environmental licenses for two new mines. The country also mines other materials such as uranium, tin, and tungsten.

7. Republic of Zimbabwe

Annual Lithium Production in 2021 in Tons: 1,200

The Republic of Zimbabwe is a South African country, which is famous for having a highly devalued currency that once made it print a one trillion Zimbabwe dollar. The country has one of the smallest economies in the world, which was worth \$38 billion this year, lending it a GDP per capita of \$2,523. It relies on a trading partnership with South Africa to earn foreign exchange and primarily exports commodities such as tobacco, cotton, platinum, and gold. Other exports include textile products. South Africa is Zimbabwe's largest trading partner, which often accounts for more than half of the country's exports.

The country's location on the African continent also provides it with vast natural resources. Zimbabwe's mining industry is involved in producing coal, platinum, iron, gold, and diamonds. Additionally, like other African countries, a big chunk of Zimbabwe's mined resources often remain unaccounted for - raising speculation that they have been sold on the black market. It claims to be the home to the largest lithium reserves in Africa, and production in 2021 equaled 1,200 tons according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The Bikita lithium mine is the largest of its kind in Zimbabwe, with deposits estimated to stand at a whopping 11 million tons. The USGS, on the other hand, estimates that the country as a whole had 500,000 tons of lithium reserves as of 2021.

6. Federative Republic of Brazil

Annual Lithium Production in 2021 in Tons: 1,500

The Federative Republic of Brazil, or Brazil, is a Latin and South American country that is also a rising global economy. The Brazilian economy was worth \$3.6 trillion in 2022, making it the ninth largest in the world and providing the country with a GDP per capita of \$17,208. Brazil has a vibrant mining industry as well, that produces materials such as gold, iron, manganese, nickel, and gemstones. It has consistently counted itself in the list of the world's top producers of a wide variety of metals and minerals. Brazilian lithium production stood at 1,500 tons in 2021. The country also loosened its export control rules recently, to profit from the strong global lithium demand. While accounting for a 1.5% share in global lithium mining, Brazil aims to grow this to 5% over the next decade.

As demand for lithium grows, major companies that are set to benefit in the future include Livent Corporation (NYSE:LTHM), Sociedad Quimica y Minera (NYSE:SQM), and Albemarle Corporation (NYSE:ALB).