

AUTOMOTIVE

BMW adds sustainable lithium supplier to support EV push

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Lithium is essential for producing the batteries used in EV, like the iX. Image credit: BMW

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Germany's BMW Group has partnered with a new lithium supplier as it focuses on sustainable sourcing for its electric vehicles.

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BMW has signed a multiyear contract with U.S.-based Livent for sustainable lithium extraction in Argentina. Lithium is an important raw material used for the battery cells of electric vehicles, which BMW expects will account for at least half of its global sales by 2030.

Sustainable sourcing

The contract between BMW and Livent is worth about 285 million euro, or \$334 million at current exchange. The company will supply lithium directly to BMW Group's battery cell manufacturers starting in 2022, joining another supplier who procures lithium from Australian mines.

To ensure transparency over the origins and mining methods of raw materials including lithium and cobalt, BMW Group sources the resources directly from producers and makes them available to its battery cell makers.

For instance, Livent sources lithium from a brine resource in northern Argentina, returning most of the brine directly to the surrounding salt lakes to reduce impact on the ecosystem. The company also supports local educational programs and infrastructure projects.

In early 2020, BMW Group became the first automotive manufacturer to join the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA), which sets guidelines for the responsible extraction of raw materials. Livent is now pending membership to the IRMA, as BMW sets a goal to have all of its suppliers meet the group's standards.



Livent, BMW's new supplier, mines lithium from the salt lakes of northern Argentina. Image credit: Livent

BMW and chemicals company BASF also commissioned a study, due to be released in 2022, with the University of Alaska Anchorage and University of Massachusetts Amherst to examine the impact of lithium mining on local water resources in South America.

"Lithium is one of the key raw materials for electromobility," said Dr. Andreas Wendt, member of the board of management of BMW AG responsible for purchasing and supplier network, in a statement.

"By sourcing lithium from a second supplier, we are securing requirements for production of our current fifth generation of battery cells," he said. "At the same time, we are making ourselves technologically, geographically and geopolitically less dependent on individual suppliers."

By next year, BMW Group will have about a dozen fully-electric models on the roads. The automaker forecasts it will deliver approximately 2 million EV by the end of 2025, with at least 50 percent of global sales coming from EV in 2030.

Last fall, BMW revealed its next-generation electric vehicle, as it hopes to become more competitive in the increasingly crowded luxury EV space.

The BMW iX has full range of 300 miles with 500-horsepower and is expected to go into production in the second half of 2021. Keeping sustainability in mind, natural and recycled materials will be used throughout the EV and even the batteries have a high recycling rate ([see story](#)).