

China's Huayou commissions \$300m Zimbabwe lithium plant

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Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt on Wednesday, 5 July, commissioned a lithium concentrator in Zimbabwe as it seeks to consolidate its position as one of the world's top battery materials producers.



Workers at Prospect Lithium mine and processing plant in Goromonzi, Zimbabwe, 2023. Source: Reuters/Philimon Bulawayo

Huayou acquired the Arcadia hard rock deposit, 40km outside Harare, from Australia-listed Prospect Resources for \$422m in April 2022. The Chinese company invested a further \$300m to build a plant to produce 450,000 metric tons of lithium concentrates annually.

The Arcadia plant took nine months to construct and started exporting concentrates in April after the plant went into trial production, George Fang, Huayou vice president and chairman of the Zimbabwe unit, said in a speech to mark the commissioning.

"We have exported close to 30,000 metric tons. This equates to \$40m in revenue generation," Fang said.

Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who officiated at the commissioning, said the southern African country hopes its huge hard rock lithium resources will help revive its struggling economy.

"Lithium is a mineral of the present and the future. It is beneficial and will position our country in the global lithium value chain," Mnangagwa said.



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Trevor Barnard, deputy general manager of Huayou's Zimbabwe unit, said the company was undertaking feasibility studies on further processing.

"We are not at the battery stage yet, it will take a regional approach from quite a few mines coming together to do beneficiation (processing)," Barnard told Reuters.

Chinese firms including Huayou, Sinomine Resource Group, Chengxin Lithium Group, Yahua Group and Canmax Technologies have spent more than \$1bn over the past two years to acquire and develop lithium projects in Zimbabwe.

London-listed Premier African Minerals has said it will start producing lithium concentrates from its Zulu mine in southern Zimbabwe this year despite a delay caused by a plant defect.

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