



Bolivia's Vinto tin smelter boosts output in 2016



Bolivia's state-owned tin smelter Empresa Metalurgica Vinto (EMV) increased production 8.3% last year after bringing online an US\$39.5mn Ausmelt blast furnace

The smelter, controlled by Comibol, produced a record 13,111t refined tin in 2016, EMV's CEO Ramiro Villavicencio said. The smelter produced 12,106t the

previous year, according to information on Comibol's website.

Vinto shipped 13,000t of refined tin abroad last year, which generated US\$234 mn in export revenue, Villavicencio said.

The company, expropriated from Swiss trader Glencore in 2007, is working on studies for a US\$345 mn expansion that would increase capacity to 62,000t/y and

treat by-products such as indium, gallium, germanium, copper, zinc and lead, according to Comibol. The smelter could also produce tin alloys containing silver, copper and lead, Villavicencio said.

Bolivia's total refined tin exports gained 14% to US\$271 mn through November, according to the country's national statistics institute.

Comibol is also working on two other projects in 2017: producing copper sulfate at the Coro Coro mine and mining machinery at the Pulacayo refinery, according to a statement.

The company has been beset by problems over the past year, closing both its Karachipampa silver-lead smelter & the El Mutun iron ore mine due to technical problems & slumping metals prices. In addition, Swiss trader Glencore last year filed for arbitration against the Bolivian govt. for the expropriation of mining assets from 2007-12.

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