
Media information

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Volkswagen Group, BASF, Daimler AG and Fairphone start partnership for sustainable Lithium mining in Chile

- The “Responsible Lithium Partnership” seeks to promote sustainable development and improved natural resource management
- Volkswagen Group, BASF, Daimler AG, and Fairphone fund the initiative at its inception
- GIZ to initiate a participatory process, inviting all relevant actors in the Salar de Atacama to work on a joint action plan
- Focus on protection of the Salar de Atacama watershed in Chile

Several companies have initiated a “Responsible Lithium Partnership” aiming to work towards responsible natural resource management, including lithium, in Chile’s Salar de Atacama. This cross-industry partnership is funded at its inception by Volkswagen Group, BASF, Daimler AG, and Fairphone. The partnership intends to foster a dialogue among local stakeholders, generating and synthesizing scientific facts and seeking solutions in a participatory manner.



In 2020, Volkswagen Group and Daimler AG started a ground investigation in Chile as part of their human rights risk assessment. Now, with BASF and Fairphone joining the team, they fund a GIZ initiated process with local stakeholders to develop a joint action plan.

Due to the expansion of e-mobility and digitization, the demand for lithium as key material in batteries is expected to grow in the next years. The World’s largest lithium reserves and large parts of the total production are located in the Salar de Atacama. The region’s ecosystem is fragile and there is lack of consensus regarding the impacts and risks of lithium mining and other economic activity in the region. Potential risks derived from water and brine table shifts could potentially harm the ecosystems and affect local livelihoods. Addressing such water-related risks effectively requires the collaboration of stakeholders.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, commissioned by the companies, will coordinate the partnership seeking to find common ground by building a multi-stakeholder platform among all relevant actors in the Salar watershed -

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ranging from civil society groups including indigenous communities, government institutions, mining companies and beyond.

The platform aims to facilitate a common understanding of the status quo and jointly develop a shared vision for the future of the Salar de Atacama watershed. In addition, it intends the co-development of a joint action plan to improve long-term integrated natural resource management and undertake the first implementing steps.

Another aim is to synthesize and verify available technical data, improve on it if necessary, and increase accessibility. The Responsible Lithium Partnership will commence in spring 2021, with a planned duration of 2.5 years. It does not intend to facilitate the sourcing of lithium nor the purchase or selling of any raw mineral.

The financing companies BASF, Daimler AG, Fairphone, and Volkswagen Group are aware of their responsibility along the entire supply chain, including their human rights due diligence for raw material sourcing and production. They have, therefore, initiated the “Responsible Lithium Partnership” to promote sustainable development, contribute to the reduction of potential negative impacts and strengthen the protection of human rights.

The Responsible Lithium Partnership shows that in today’s highly interconnected value chains, responsible business conduct is not only based on collaborating with business partners, but also relies on constructive engagement with governments and civil society. As such, the Partnership aims at a holistic approach and seeks to connect all local stakeholders in a joint vision for the Salar de Atacama.

The “Responsible Lithium Partnership” is part of the Volkswagen’s human rights due diligence activities in raw material supply chains. All these activities can be found in Volkswagen Group’s first “Responsible Raw Materials Report” 2020 (<https://www.volkswagenag.com/de/sustainability/sustainability-in-the-supply-chain.html>). The report gives an overview of the company’s activities in 2020 in the area of responsible raw material sourcing. It was drafted based on the OECD guideline.

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Volkswagen AG

Corporate Communications | Sustainability Spokesperson

Contact Sebastian Schaffer

Phone +49-172-5290334

E-mail sebastian.schaffer@volkswagen.de | www.volkswagen-newsroom.com



About the Volkswagen Group:

Based in Wolfsburg, Germany, the Volkswagen Group is one of the world's leading automotive manufacturers, and the largest car maker in Europe. The Group comprises twelve brands from seven European countries: Volkswagen Passenger Cars, Audi, SEAT, ŠKODA, Bentley, Bugatti, Lamborghini, Porsche, Ducati, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, Scania and MAN. The passenger car portfolio ranges from small cars all the way to luxury-class vehicles. Ducati offers motorcycles. In the light and heavy commercial vehicles sector, the products range from pick-ups to buses and heavy trucks. Every weekday, 671,205 employees around the globe produce on average 44,567 vehicles, are involved in vehicle-related services or work in other areas of business. The Volkswagen Group sells its vehicles in 153 countries.

In 2019, the total number of vehicles delivered to customers by the Group globally was 10.97 million (2018: 10.83 million). The passenger car global market share was 12.9 percent. Group sales revenue in 2019 totalled EUR 252.6 billion (2018: EUR 236 billion). Earnings after tax in the fiscal year now ended amounted to EUR 14.0 billion (2018: EUR 12.2 billion).
