

ACF launches aluminothermic plant

African Chrome Fields (ACF), Zimbabwe's biggest chrome miner, has launched its state-of-the-art aluminothermic plant, which is set to further increase the company's range of products and boost employment across its operations.



Aluminothermic plant

"The aluminothermic process is not only more efficient, but cleaner as well, when compared to more conventional methods. The specific recipe and know-how of the aluminothermic plant for this manner of beneficiation is unique to ACF. The main ingredient being the high-grade ferrochrome that ACF mines alluvially," says John Drummond, ACF's chief technical officer.

The technologically-advanced plant will initially produce 300 tonnes per month of ultra low carbon high grade ferrochrome (ULCHGFeCr), which is expected to ramp-up production to 600 tonnes of ULCHGFeCr per month at full production. The production process will increase the economic value of the high-grade chromite ore by removing large quantities of gangue minerals, resulting in a higher grade ferrochrome with minimum impurities

The process also creates certain by-products that have economic value themselves and will be sold as a secondary income from the plant. The 50 new jobs created by the plant brings the total number of employees at ACF to over approximately 1,250, further increasing employment in the region.

Beneficiation

The process used by the aluminothermic plant requires no electricity and allows ACF the opportunity to increase the economic value of the chromite it mines by way of beneficiation, which is in line with the Zim-ASSETS programme endorsed by the Zimbabwean government. "Zimbabwe currently sits on over 12% of global chrome reserves and we want to help the country fulfil its true potential as a major global player in the production and beneficiation of this vital stainless-steel ingredient," says Ashruf Kaka, ACF national project liaison officer.

The plant, which took just over 10 months to complete since receiving approval from the Environmental

Management Agency, has been well received by the local community, government officials, and environmental auditors.

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