



IRMA

Initiative for Responsible
Mining Assurance

How IRMA Benefits Mining Operations

Addressing Risks While Promoting Operational Excellence

The global reliance on mined materials is undeniable. Mined materials form the backbone of modern society, embedded in everything from our electronics to our infrastructure. Mining companies are essential to modern life, providing the materials necessary for these industries. However, the world is now expecting even more from mining operations, especially in their role in the global energy transition and in addressing their historical legacy. Despite its importance, the mining industry faces significant scrutiny due to the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risks inherent in its operations.

The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) offers a robust solution by providing a comprehensive, independently verified standard and assessment system that allows mining companies to receive credit for the positive work they are already doing, while also identifying areas for improvement.

IRMA was founded on the belief that every individual impacted by mining should have a say in how responsible mining is defined and measured. By convening experts, advocates, and industry leaders across six key sectors, we have developed an independent, best-practice standard for responsible mining, as well as a transparent process for assessing mine performance against that standard.

IRMA acknowledges the challenges mining companies face, such as the fact that governments have not always required certain standards, the market didn't previously value them, and that companies often operate in complex regions. By using IRMA, mining companies can tell a transparent and truthful story about the materials we rely on every day, highlighting ongoing efforts and progress.

IRMA is unique in that it was co-created by six diverse sectors, ensuring communities, workers, and NGOs are given an equal voice alongside mining companies, purchasers of mined materials, and finance professionals. As more and more audit reports are released, we are seeing that this system, built by all sectors, has concrete benefits for each one.

Just as IRMA was co-created by six diverse sectors, IRMA continues to provide all those sectors with a unique forum for dialogue, both within sectors and between them. Each sector leverages the opportunity presented by IRMA to share perspectives, build understanding, and find collaborative solutions for complex challenges. For example, since 2021 IRMA's Buyers Group – made up of downstream purchasers and minerals processors – has met monthly to discuss shared interests such as responsible sourcing, traceability, the rapidly evolving regulatory landscape, whilst also meeting regularly with the mining sector to share perspectives and build understanding between the downstream and upstream ends of the supply chain. Even beyond the Standard itself, IRMA represents a community of diverse interests working to collectively build a more secure and equitable future.

“ If we’re going to do this, let’s do it in as coordinated and integrated a way as possible. Doing it once to a high bar is better than doing it lots of times to a lower bar. ”

JON SAMUEL, ANGLOAMERICAN



IRMA Represents Best Practice

The IRMA Standard is not just another framework; it is a convergence of best practices across a wide range of ESG standards and guidelines. Mining companies face increasing pressure to meet requirements from various stakeholders, including governments, investors, and communities. IRMA provides a streamlined, credible solution that addresses these pressures by offering a comprehensive standard that covers all aspects of mining operations.

A key aspect of IRMA is its focus on continuous improvement rather than a simple pass or fail system. IRMA’s grading system encourages mining companies to address risks proactively, ensuring that issues are managed before they escalate into critical problems that could disrupt operations or damage reputations. This approach helps mining companies illustrate how they are working towards higher standards, long before achieving "best practice" status. The IRMA scoring system demonstrates progress and offers recognition for the hard work and efforts already underway.

IRMA Provides Visibility and Credibility, Across All Mineral Groups

IRMA provides assessment at the mine site where most risks associated with mineral supply chains occur. Staff are directly seeing the growing demand from customers and investors for mine sites to undergo an IRMA audit. IRMA connects mining companies with their customers and investors, allowing these stakeholders to see their commitment to improvement. Importantly, these customers and investors are also part of the change, as they pledge to support their suppliers and create value for companies dedicated to sustainable practices.

Furthermore, IRMA is accountable to civil society, workers, and unions, providing a level of credibility and trust that other standards may lack. Given that all standards require time and financial investment from mining companies, it is critical that this investment is made in a system, like IRMA, that truly improves relationships and financial value.

“ Our philosophy was continuous improvement. It was all about the journey. It wasn't about the audit itself but really improving how we operate. ”

ELLEN LENNY-PESSAGNO, ALBEMARLE



IRMA Delivers Direct Financial Value and Risk Mitigation to Mining Operations

Adopting IRMA offers numerous benefits that directly support the strategic goals of mining companies and reduce ESG risks at mine sites:

- * **Improved Practices:** IRMA's framework allows mining companies to identify and address gaps in their operations systematically, promoting long-term operational resilience and greater trust from stakeholders and regulators.
- * **Enhanced Compliance:** By aligning with IRMA, companies can meet or exceed local, national, and international regulations, reducing the risk of fines, sanctions, or reputational damage.
- * **Community Relations:** IRMA emphasizes building and maintaining positive relationships with local communities, including through robust implementation of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, reducing the likelihood of protests or disruptions.
- * **Environmental Stewardship:** IRMA's standards help companies prevent environmental degradation, thereby avoiding costly restoration efforts and liabilities.
- * **Access to Capital and Financial Benefits:** Companies that meet IRMA standards often find it easier to access capital and attract investment. Additionally, lower risk profiles can lead to reduced insurance premiums.

IRMA Helps Mining Operations Meet Customer Expectations

Customers are facing increasingly robust and detailed due diligence regulations, including understanding impacts across their full supply chain, hearing directly from impacted communities, and ensuring there are solid grievance mechanisms in place to bring issues to light. Providing customers with a comprehensive audit report from IRMA allows mining companies to meet customers' due diligence requirements.

IRMA supports both mine sites and customers to track and meet increasingly stringent regulations. By continuing to set out best-practice expectations, IRMA allows companies to stay ahead of competition by reporting against the IRMA Standard which often go beyond other regulatory requirements and industry standards. This is because IRMA continues to be developed and updated by all six houses, including civil society.



“The continued scaling of IRMA across the mining industry and raw material supply chains remains critical to unlocking the ability of the Volkswagen Group

and other downstream brands to achieve their responsible sourcing goals. We fully support IRMA's efforts to engage with mining-affected communities, civil society and trade unions on how the IRMA system can serve as a tool for meaningful engagement to improve mining practices worldwide.”

VOLKSWAGEN GROUP RESPONSIBLE RAW MATERIALS REPORT 2023¹

“ [The IRMA process led us to conduct] a human rights due diligence process. It was gratifying to listen to others, and many times, you can correct deficiencies in a matter of weeks. IRMA has helped us define a roadmap in order to continue to improve and this helps us to have a long-term sustainability vision.

”

JAVIER SILVA, SQM



IRMA is Widely Accepted and Respected for its Credibility

IRMA has established itself as the preeminent standard in the mining industry, consistently outperforming other frameworks in terms of transparency, accountability, and robustness. This recognition is echoed by several leading global organizations and companies.

Mercedes-Benz, released a guidance document² for suppliers in late 2023, comparing several mining standards in terms of governance, auditing and transparent reporting. IRMA received the highest score of all standards and the company has publicly endorsed IRMA as the leading mining standard for its rigorous approach to responsible sourcing.

Germanwatch, has also recognized³ IRMA's inclusive governance model, which ensures that the voices of all stakeholders — including communities, workers, and civil society organizations — are represented in the standard-setting process.

Lead the Charge, an NGO coalition advocating for sustainable practices in the electric vehicle and battery sectors, has cited IRMA⁴ as the most robust standard for ensuring that raw materials are sourced responsibly. The coalition emphasizes that IRMA's focus on continuous improvement and long-term risk mitigation is crucial for the sustainable growth of these industries.

IRMA is Rapidly Scaling Globally Across All Minerals

IRMA's growing influence in the mining industry is reflected in its expanding adoption. Currently, nearly 100 mining companies are formally engaged in the IRMA system, representing hundreds of sites worldwide.

Companies that align with IRMA are not only better positioned to meet the demands of regulators, customers, and investors, but are also leading the way in building a more sustainable and equitable mining industry.

Currently, mining operations engaged in either independent audit or self-assessment cover the following 52 mined materials:

Aggregates	Kyanite	Rare Earth Elements
Barite	Lanthanum	Rhodium
Bauxite	Lead	Ruthenium
Cerium	Limestone	Samarium
Chromite	Lithium	Sand
Chromium	Magnesium	Selenium
Coal (metallurgical)	Mica	Silver
Cobalt	Mineral sands	Staurolite
Copper	Molybdenum	Sulphur
Diamonds	Monazite sand	Talc
Europium	Neodymium	Tellurium
Feldspar	Nickel	Titanium
Gadolinium	Osmium	Tourmaline
Gold	Palladium	Vanadium
Graphite	Praseodymium	Xenotime
Iridium	Platinum	Zinc
Iron	Potash	Zircon
	Quartz	

“ [T]he IRMA Standard covers all of Eramet’s requirements in terms of responsible mining (community relations, environmental protection, human rights, governance). The Standard defines best practices for what responsible mining should look like at the industrial-scale and meets the expectations of all our stakeholders (host countries and communities, customers, end consumers, employees, investors).

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VIRGINIE DE CHASSEY,⁵ ERAMET



IRMA is Focused on Long-Term, Durable, and Sustainable De-Risking of Mineral Supply Chains

IRMA is based on the inherent value of continuous improvement for companies to understand where they are performing well and where there are opportunities for improvement. The intention is not to give mine sites a pass or fail grade, but rather to promote fundamental change for lasting positive outcomes. These outcomes support better future-proofing and risk analysis to support efficient operations that benefit all stakeholders. IRMA is less concerned about calling out nonconformities today and is instead designed to ensure that a risk is positively addressed for good.

IRMA is Practical and Achievable

Widely-recognized for being the most robust and rigorous standard system available, IRMA is absolutely achievable. The vast majority of audited mines assessed to date met more than 75% of the standard as a whole, and in 25 of the 26 chapters in the Standard, there has been at least one site achieving a score of 90% or more.

Assessing through IRMA is not just a strategic choice — it’s a solid business decision. IRMA provides a credible, comprehensive framework that addresses the full spectrum of risks and challenges in the mining industry, offering a clear path to responsible mining that benefits all stakeholders. By assessing through IRMA, companies can ensure they are not only meeting today’s standards but are also prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

IRMA is Here to Help

Where to start? IRMA’s self-assessment tool, Mine Measure, is free of charge for a mining company to assess one mine site. Self-assessments allow for mining companies to understand the IRMA Standard and how to measure their operations against them. The self-assessment can be entirely confidential or shared with specific stakeholders to work together to improve prior to assessment.

IRMA offers one-to-one, free, and confidential meetings for mining companies to gain a better understanding of the system, including its programs, tools, audit process, value of the independent assessment and associated costs.

Please reach out to IRMA’s Mining Sector Leads at info@responsiblemining.net for an introductory meeting.

NOTES

1. <https://www.volkswagen-group.com/en/press-releases/volkswagen-group-publishes-third-responsible-raw-materials-report-17465>
2. <https://group.mercedes-benz.com/responsibility/sustainability/supply-chains/risk-raw-materials.html>
3. https://www.germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/germanwatch_an_examination_of_industry_standards_in_the_raw_materials_sector_2022-09.pdf
4. <https://leadthecharge.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/LeadTheCharge-Assessment-06022024.pdf>
5. <https://www.eramet.com/en/news/2023/05/eramet-accelere-son-engagement-rse-avec-le-lancement-de-son-premier-audit-par-linitiative-for-responsible-mining-assurance/>