

September 2025

IRMA: An Overview

What is IRMA?

IRMA is a voluntary international standard and site-level third-party assurance system for industrial-scale mining. The **IRMA Standard for Responsible Mining** is a best-practice standard for industrial-scale mining, informed by over a decade of robust global multi-stakeholder dialogue. The **IRMA Chain of Custody Standard for Responsibly Mined Materials** provides requirements for tracking IRMA-audited materials from the mine site to the end user, linking market value to IRMA-audited material and recycled content.

In practice IRMA is three separate things:

1. **The IRMA Standards**,
2. **The process** by which sites are assessed against IRMA Standards, and
3. **The organization** that manages the IRMA Standards and system.

What makes IRMA different from other mining standards?

- **Equal governance:** Each of IRMA's six houses have equal governing authority in IRMA.
- **Comprehensive coverage:** The IRMA Mining Standard covers the full range of social and environmental impacts from industrial scale mining, for all geographies and all mined materials.¹
- **Inclusive independent audits:** Audits against the IRMA Mining Standard are publicly announced in advance to welcome broad participation, are conducted by accredited independent third-party audit firms, and include input from stakeholders and rights holders at the site level.
- **Transparent site-level reporting:** IRMA audit reports are available to the public at no cost, providing scoring and rationale for each applicable requirement.

How is IRMA Governed?

One of the most important aspects setting the IRMA system apart from other standards systems is its commitment to serve each IRMA house equally. Trust in IRMA is based on **equal governance** of the standard and system by mining companies, affected communities and Indigenous rights holders, labor, NGOs, investors, and purchasing companies through the IRMA Board of Directors. While the Board strives to reach decisions by consensus, when a vote is needed, the six houses of IRMA have equal voting power in guiding how the system operates and which requirements are included in IRMA Standards.

How are stakeholders and rights holders engaged in IRMA audits?

IRMA's independent audit process ensures that local stakeholders and rights holders engaged in the audit process. IRMA audits are transparently noticed, raising awareness of stakeholders and rights holders that an audit will occur at a specific mine in a specific timeframe. IRMA proactively reaches out to affected communities, Indigenous rights holders, and workers to ensure they understand what IRMA is and what an IRMA audit seeks to achieve. Auditors also do independent outreach to workers, affected communities, and Indigenous rights holders, conducting interviews beyond mine management alone. This enables a holistic assessment of the mine's performance. Finally, IRMA audit reports are publicly released so purchasers, investors, communities and civil society understand how a company was assessed. A grievance mechanism is available to anyone wishing to raise concerns.

¹ IRMA is not applicable to the mining of energy fuels, including oil, gas, uranium and thermal coal, nor is it applicable to deep sea mining.

How is the market responding to IRMA?

The founding members of IRMA understood that a few leading mining companies would be motivated to assess against IRMA of their own volition. However, they also understood that broad uptake required a clear and unified call from the market for mines to be audited. IRMA has seen a substantial increase in engagement from the mining sector since 2020.

2020 began with only three mining companies using IRMA's Mine Measure self-assessment tool to prepare for a third-party audit. As of September 2025, there are 105 mining companies and 127 sites engaged in IRMA. 27 sites owned by 16 mining companies have engaged in IRMA's independent third-party audit system and 14 audit reports have been published.² Engagement in IRMA spans 37 countries, from Argentina to Zimbabwe, and are 54 materials.

This uptake occurred because purchasers from diverse sectors—such as automakers, electronics companies, jewelers, and renewable energy companies—have made clear statements about their intent and interest to source from IRMA-audited mines. They communicated this through public announcements, direct outreach, and writing IRMA audit requirements into sourcing contracts.

However, the call for IRMA did not come from purchasers alone. Affected communities, Indigenous rights holders, workers, and civil society organizations have referred to IRMA as the type of standard they wish to see adopted by the mining sector.

IRMA as a Recognized Leader

In 2025 the International Energy Agency (IEA) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published *The Role of Traceability in Critical Mineral Supply Chains*, stating, "Some chain of custody standards, such as those by the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance ... go beyond traceability by integrating performance requirements that ensure responsible practices at the mine or processor of origin. The reliability of this information is crucial, with growing attention on these initiatives' governance systems, oversight models, and approaches to information and external accountability."

The 2024 British Columbia Assembly of First Nations resolution *Support for the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) Mining Standard* states, "Be it resolved that: The BCASN Chiefs-in-Assembly endorse the IRMA Mining Standard and call on the government of British Columbia to support and

adopt the IRMA mining standard, ensuring that it includes the right of free, prior and informed consent to our traditional and unceded territories, respecting the territorial boundaries that we confirm through working together Nation to Nation."

In 2024, Chile's Ministry of Mining and Chilean Copper Commission published *Levantamiento de Iniciativas ESG en la Minería*. The report describes IRMA audits, stating, "The results of the audits provide credible information to buyers, satisfying civil society's desire to know whether a mining company is taking steps to reduce potential harm and making continuous improvements. ... This rigorous approach, along with the fact that the standard was developed over 10 years in consultation with 100 companies and organizations, covering all minerals (except fuels), distinguishes IRMA from other standards in several key ways, including applicability, transparency, fairness, and credibility."

In March 2020, the Sierra Club issued its first mining policy, stating that "where mining is necessary, it must be compliant with high-bar environmental and human rights standards such as IRMA's Standard for Responsible Mining."

In November 2020, the New York Declaration on Forests (endorsed by the UN) published a report on the urgency of balancing forest protections and development, noting: "Only IRMA's Standard for Responsible Mining provides detailed guidance and certification for mining operations and explicitly calls for the identification of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on biodiversity and ecosystem services."

In September 2022, Germanwatch, a Bonn-based NGO, determined that, unlike all other evaluated standards, IRMA satisfied the majority of its evaluation metrics. Regarding audits they remarked, "we should emphasise in particular here [that] IRMA shows that transparent communication is possible."

IRMA welcomes diverse perspectives to the table to continue to amplify and forward its vision: a world where the mining industry respects the human rights and aspirations of affected communities, provides safe, healthy and supportive workplaces, minimizes harm to the environment, and leaves positive legacies.

² Reports from these audits are available for review on the IRMA website, demonstrating IRMA's transparency.