



Type what you want to search

Search

12/02/2010



## Vale inaugurates copper operation in Chile

Today, December 2nd, Vale inaugurates its Tres Valles copper plant, the mining company's first project in Chile. Located in Salamanca in the IV Region of Coquimbo, the plant, whose annual production capacity will be 18.5 kt of copper cathodes, will be the company's first to produce cathodes on an industrial scale using the hydrometallurgical process. Total investment in the construction phase was US\$140 million. The project began in 2005 with exploration that led to the discovery of the Papomono and Don Gabriel mineral deposits. In October 2008, environmental impact studies for the Tres Valles Project were submitted and its environmental license was approved 12 months later. The following year, the project entered its final construction stage, a record time for a venture of this size. The Tres Valles plant has two mines: Don Gabriel, an open-pit mine, and Papomono, an underground one. This is just the beginning for Vale's investment in Chile, since all of the revenue generated from the venture will be reinvested in new mineral exploration in the Andean region of Chile. To ensure the success of the Tres Valles project, Vale prioritized the hiring of local workers, in line with its global politics of generating wealth and sustainable development in the regions where it operates. In the case of Tres Valles, the company created job opportunities for the local population in order to contribute to the development of the communities of Salamanca and Illapel and the province of Choapa. Around 1,800 direct and indirect jobs were created during the implementation phase. In the operational phase, 560 jobs will be created. One of the main characteristics of this new copper operation is the use of environmental preservation technologies that enable lower water consumption. Tres Valles uses a bioleaching system in its hydrometallurgical process that was developed in Chile to make copper soluble from some types of sulfate using bacteria. Vale's copper production in Chile will mainly be exported to the Brazilian, North American and Asian markets. In addition to Tres Valles, the company produces copper concentrate in Sossego, Carajás, in the state of Pará in northern Brazil. In Canada, Vale produces anode and cathode copper concentrate associated with its nickel operations in Sudbury and Voisey Bay. Social development Since 2005, when Vale's exploration began in the region, the company has conducted a series of programs to benefit local people, including training courses and the creation of small local companies, such as a community nursery. In addition, the company has made an agreement with the Salamanca Miners' Association enabling 70 miners from the region to operate at 31 points inside Vale's concession area, with technical support and infrastructure provided by the mining company. Vale has also planned programs to benefit the people of Salamanca in terms of infrastructure, occupational training, health, sanitation and traffic education.

### More information



#### Mônica Ferreira

monica.ferreira@vale.com

Rio de Janeiro

+55 (21) 3845-3636

#### Fatima Cristina

fatima.cristina@vale.com

Rio de Janeiro

+55 (21) 3485-3621