

Global lithium sector eyes Argentina's salt flats on tech test run

SALAR CENTENARIO, Argentina, July 10 (Reuters) - In a dusty plain in northern Argentina's mountains, black tubes stretching two stories high fill a massive tank with salty brine sucked from deep below ground.

The brine contains lithium, a silvery white metal essential for making electric vehicle batteries and in high demand as the world shifts to green energy. French miner Eramet (ERMT.PA), opens new tab is attempting to use an innovative technique, known as direct lithium extraction, or DLE, in a race for cleaner, faster and cheaper ways to produce the metal with less water.

Unlike traditional methods, there are no pools of brine spanning the size of football fields where lithium is left behind after the liquid evaporates in the sun.

DLE, which extracts the metal much more quickly, could be critical to global production given 70% of the world's lithium is found in brine, rather than rock or clay.

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