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Royal Silver starts up non-polluting pilot smelter

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By [Harvey Beltrán](#)
Business News Americas

Bolivia-based Royal Silver has started up a pilot smelter for copper, silver, lead, zinc, gold and other metals, company president Brian McConnell told BNamericas.

"The [pilot] plant currently is processing 4t/d. It doesn't generate smoke, odors or other emissions," McConnell said.

After 13 years of research and an investment of about US\$5mn, McConnell received the patent for the new, non-polluting smelter technology that will first be used in Bolivia. The executive then plans to offer the technology to countries such as Mexico and Peru, which have some highly polluting smelters.

The technology, dubbed Argox, is a hydrometallurgical process that can treat any mineral, in a short time and at a low cost, while yielding high-purity metals without polluting, according to McConnell.

Bolivia is the fifth largest silver producer in the world and ranks twelfth in zinc production, McConnell said, but until now it did not have its own smelter. "The pilot facility achieved continuous production this month," the executive said.

Royal Silver is the only company in Bolivia that produces gold and silver from minerals purchased from local plants and mining cooperatives.

The pilot plant has a capacity of 6t/d and is located in Cochabamba department. Royal Silver is planning to build a 25-40t/d smelter in the same location in the future.

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