

Cotapata Miners Cooperative, Bolivia



Location

The Small-scale Mining Cooperative of Cotapata is located two hours from the city of La Paz, in the Cotapata National Park, situated in the municipality of Coroico. The region is very attractive for its biodiversity which means that taking care of the environment is a principle policy for this organization.

Organisation

The coop was founded the 5th of October, 1992, before the region was declared a national reserve. They have 45 members of which 10 are women. All the miners of the coop work and depend exclusively on mining.

For the years of experience and the technical assistance received, the coop's work is recognized and considered a model in terms of its organization and environmental responsibility at both the national and international level.

Production

The coop has a mechanized plant, where they process approximately 25 tons daily, which produces around 2 500 grams of gold monthly.

During the processing the correct use, handling and recuperation of mercury is practiced in accordance with their environmental license. Likewise all waste generated from mining is handled in an environmentally friendly manner.





Achievements

One of the principal achievements is being certified as the first Fairtrade/Fairmined mining organization at the end of 2010. The official market launch of the FT/FM label, in London, England was done using Gold from Cotapata. Upon meeting the requirements of the FT/FM standard, the coop achieved an improved work system, strengthened the organization and became commercially formalized, complying with the payment of taxes and dividends to the state.

Challenges

The principal challenge has been opening up export markets for their gold in Europe and other regions.

Maintaining compliance with the Fairtrade/Fairmined standard also requires a concerted effort.

They are also working hard to increase their production with the expansion of a processing plant that will allow for increased output.

Our proposal

Currently the focus is on opening up commercial and export markets for the cooperative. The objective is to achieve sustainable, long term foreign market sales for their certified gold.

