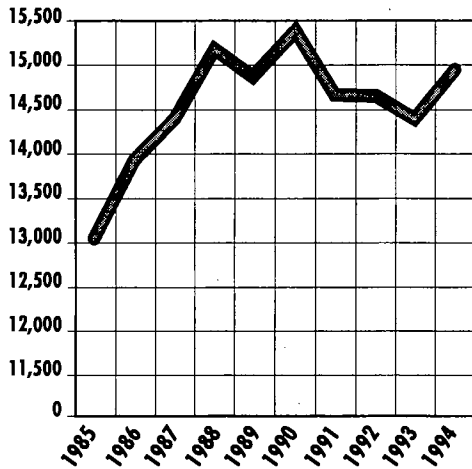


NON-METALLIC MINERALS

Non-metallic minerals are emerging as a key subsector of the mining industry, although they still account for only 12 percent of mineral production.

**NON-METALLIC MINERALS PRODUCTION,
'000s OF TONNES**



Source: *Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI)*,
Secretariat of Commerce and Industrial Development.

Traditionally Mexico's mineral production was concentrated in metallic minerals such as silver, copper, lead and zinc. As the industry has developed, several important non-metals have been exploited. Nonetheless, non-ferrous metals still account for more than 46 percent of Mexico's mineral production by value, while non-metals make up only about 12 percent.

Production of non-metallic minerals continues to grow as both domestic and international demand increase. Many of the non-metallic minerals produced in the country are used in the manufacturing industry, which is currently experiencing an export boom. The growth of this sector has also been bolstered by extensive reserves, the relatively small investment required, and the labour-intensive nature of this type of mining.

Mexico is the world's top producer of celestite. This mineral is used primarily to produce strontium carbonate for the manufacture of colour television picture tubes, X-ray equipment and ceramic magnets. As a result, Mexico is the principal supplier of colour televisions to the United States. With production estimated at about 50,000 tonnes annually, the country leads the world in the production of this mineral, accounting for around 39.1 percent of world production.

Most Mexican exports of celestite are destined for the American and Japanese markets, and projected world demand for strontium carbonate is leading several Mexican companies to expand their processing capacity.

Mexico is among the top ten countries in the world producing fluorite, graphite, salt, gypsum and sulphur. In most cases, roughly half of the country's annual production of these minerals is exported.

Mexico produced 282,988 tonnes of fluorite in 1993, of which about 40 percent was exported. Substantial investments have recently been made to expand the industry's present installed capacity. Production increased by 15.7 percent in 1994. The enforcement of global restrictions on the production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is leading to the development of substitutes with an increased fluorite content. This will provide a significant boost to Mexico's fluorite industry.