

Lead And Zinc

Lead and zinc production hold second priority to aluminium for the Chinese government, with major expansions in Gansu Province and greenfield projects in Yunnan Province slated for the next decade. China has the largest world reserves of both lead and zinc (estimated at fifty million and twenty million tons, respectively). In 1991, 296,000 tons of lead and 578,000 tons of zinc were produced, and 5.4 million and 7.2 million kilograms, respectively, were imported. Consumption is estimated at 500,000 and 270,000 tons of lead and zinc respectively. It is expected that China will import annually 100,000 tons of zinc into the mid-'90s.

Canada continues to be a leading supplier of zinc to the PRC despite a successive drop from 52,000 tons in 1985 to 6,800 tons in 1987. By 1992, Canada's lead exports to China totalled over Cdn. \$115,000, while zinc exports totalled over Cdn. \$626,000.

Copper

Due to the low grade of China's copper deposits (reserves are estimated at 350 million tons), the copper mining industry has a low growth target. Therefore, China will continue to depend heavily upon imports. China is now the tenth-largest copper producing country in the world, and the sixth-largest consumer. Although smelting and refining capacity is far in excess of mining capability, China is not planning any new mines; poor grade and inconveniently located deposits, make mine development uneconomical. The plan instead is to concentrate on the improvement of existing mines, such as the top-producing Dexing in the Jiangxi Province, and to develop access to foreign sources of supply.

China's copper requirement is estimated at 800,000 tons annually. With an estimated increase in consumption of four to five percent per year, annual consumption could reach close to 900,000 tons by the end of the century. Imports vary between 100,000 and 300,000 tons per year, in the form of cathodes and blister. Volumes