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Ecological gold from Mongolia: Artisanal miners obtain Fairmined Certification

For the first time ever an artisanal and small-scale mining organization outside of South America has reached Fairmined Certification. The Mongolian NGO XAMODX now joins the existing three Fairmined certified organizations. They are the only producer of Fairmined Ecological Gold, a special Fairmined label for Fairmined Gold produced without the use of mercury or cyanide.

“It is a big honour for us as miners to get Fairmined Certification for the first time in Mongolia. When we heard the news, we were all so excited. All of us worked very hard to meet the requirements of the Fairmined Standard during the last 2-3 years.” Said Mr. Ch. Otgonbaatar, head of XAMODX.

The story of how the mining community came to be, begins back in 2006 when difficult conditions led herding communities to search for alternative livelihoods to survive the “dzuds” - extremely hard and cold winters that raged for consecutive years killing large herds of livestock. This situation, right in the aftermath of Mongolia’s economic transition when unemployment was on a rise, made the herding community move to an abandoned mine site called Tsagaan tsakhir in the Bayan-Ovoo Soum territory. It is there they began to focus their activities on mining - their only available alternative to herding. Since then the miners have worked hard to make mining a sustainable livelihood and now, less than ten years later, they claim the title as the world’s only organization with Fairmined Ecological Certification.

It is thanks to the support of the Sustainable Artisanal Mining (SAM) Project of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation in Mongolia that XAMODX is now one of four certified Fairmined organizations in the world and the first of its kind in Mongolia. The SAM project’s goal is the increased formalization of Mongolia’s artisanal mining sector while strengthening their social and environmental responsibility, formalization of ASM supply chains for sustainable livelihoods and tangible contribution to local and national economic development. On their way to certification, the SAM project supported XAMODX with organizational capacity strengthening, safety and environmental training and mining site management.

The community that is made up of around 2000 people mainly depends on mining, though a minority still relies on livestock and other small businesses and workshops. Women miners participate actively in the leadership of XAMODX which was formally established as a mining organization in 2009 with the main goal of protecting rights and improve livelihoods of legal miners. Now, as a Fairmined certified organization, XAMODX will be able to export to ethical markets at a fair price and make further important improvements to their mining organization and to the community.

Fairmined Certification was created by the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM), a non-profit organization globally recognized as a leader and pioneer of responsible artisanal and small-scale mining. Fairmined Gold means assurance for miners, the industry and consumers. The gold can be traced from mine to market. By buying Fairmined gold, businesses and individuals contribute to positive change through social development and

environmental management in mining communities like XAMODX, giving everyone a source of gold to be proud of.

“It is a very big opportunity for local artisanal and small-scale miners to get Fairmined certified and to be increasingly known in Mongolia as well as in other countries. This will show how Mongolia’s responsible artisanal miners work as independent organizations according to the laws and regulations in the country. We will share all our experiences with other mining organizations in the country as well as in Asia” Says Mr. L. Byambadorj, member of XAMODX mining community.

“I want to congratulate XAMODX and the SAM project on this incredible achievement that represents a new milestone in the industry. We are honored that the SAM project and other allies recognize Fairmined Certification as the number one tool to transform artisanal and small-scale mining and join us in expanding the benefits of Fairmined to more miners.” Said Lina Villa, Executive Director of the Alliance for Responsible Mining.

For more information on Fairmined and how to source gold from XAMODX please visit www.fairmined.org or send an email to info@fairmined.org.

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[About the Alliance for Responsible Mining \(ARM\)](#)

The Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) is an independent, global-scale, pioneering initiative established in 2004 to enhance equity and wellbeing in Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) communities. ARM is committed to social justice and environmental responsibility as the values driving the transformation of ASM.

ARM's mission is to set standards for responsible ASM and to support and enable producers to deliver Fairmined certified metals and minerals through economically just supply chains to the markets, in order to contribute towards the transformation of ASM into a socially and environmentally responsible activity, and to the improvement of the quality of life of marginalized artisanal miners, their families and communities.

Fairmined is an assurance label that certifies gold from empowered responsible mining communities. It is backed by a rigorous 3rd party certification and audit system that ensures that small entrepreneurial mining communities meet world leading standards for responsible practices. Fairmined transforms mining into an active force for good, ensuring social development and environmental protection providing everyone with a source of gold they can be proud of.

There are currently 4 Fairmined certified Mining organizations in Colombia, Peru and Mongolia and 25 organizations working towards Fairmined certification with the Alliance for responsible Mining in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Senegal and Burkina Faso.

[About the Sustainable Artisanal Mining Project \(SAM\)](#)

With the boom in the informal mining sector at the start of the 2000s, the Mongolian government, with support from the SDC, launched a project for sustainable artisanal mining in 2005. The project started its 4th Phase in January 2015. The project's aim is to support formalization of ASM, strengthen its economic contribution for sustainable livelihoods while developing the capacities of both government institutions and miners through human rights based approach. It develops capacities of stakeholders to promote a socially and environmentally responsible ASM sector. The results of the SAM project to date include legalisation and formalisation of a once illegal sector, empowerment and organisation of ASM communities, improvement in safety performance of ASM, introduction of mercury free processing techniques, strengthening capacity of government stakeholders to deliver services to ASM, mainstreaming human rights issues in ASM, and facilitating cooperation between large mining companies and artisanal miners. More information, visit www.sam.mn.