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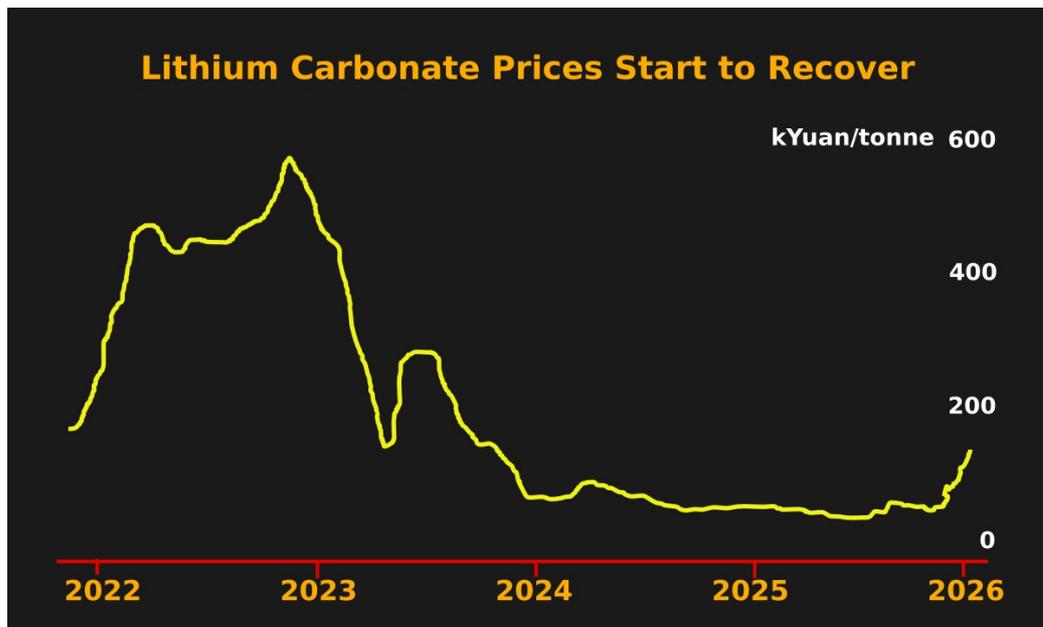
Lithium Prices Finally Recover and Perspectives for 2026

Some of the lithium issues we will be monitoring in 2026....

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Lithium prices start to recover in late 2025 – 2026. Adapted from a Bloomberg chart.

Welcome to this thirteenth issue of the Lithium Briefing from thelithiumreport.com.

2026 has started with some long awaited good news for the lithium mining industry.

In the final weeks of 2025, lithium carbonate prices finally recovered to well over \$10,000 per tonne and yesterday reached nearly \$17,300 per tonne, the highest level for 19 months and double the June 2025 level. Spodumene concentrate likewise has reached \$1800 - \$1900 per tonne, also double the level of mid-2025.

This will provide much welcome relief to the Australian spodumene miners who have seen their profitability evaporate since late 2023, leaving only Greenbushes in the black and even they stopped paying dividends. SQM, Sigma Lithium, AMG, Albemarle, Eramet and Rio Tinto (ex-Arcadium) will all be equally relieved.

One factor behind this may be the Chinese decision to cancel mining permits for 27 mines in Jiangxi Province. However other reports indicate that these mines were in any case only marginal. The lepidolite mines in Jiangxi Province near the city of Yichun are of very poor quality and an unmitigated environmental disaster. It would be much better for the environment and even economics to close them down and focus on DLE extraction from Qinghai instead for instance.

Prices may have increased simply due to increased demand as EV sales in Europe and China reached new records in 2025. Stationary storage also continues high growth.

Some Chinese producers of LFP cells are reported to have stopped production because of the increased lithium price. This again highlights the difficult reality of the lithium battery-based EV transition: the prices needed to make lithium mining economic make EVs unaffordable for the mass market. Without other incentives or economic adjustments.

The price increase will also provide welcome relief to the many development projects in progress, most of which are uneconomic at prices below \$10,000/t. This is particularly the case since the post-COVID inflationary pressures came into play, just as EV sales also started to increase to meaningful levels.

Major mining companies are likely to remain circumspect about immediately expanding capacity or expediting new projects. Prices will need to stay at over \$15,000 per tonne for an extended period. The mining juniors that need external investors will be more active this year as they seek to attract capital.

2026 Perspectives

So hopefully a more positive price environment will now prevail for at least the next few years without another price bubble occurring that may lead to temporary super-profits for existing mining operations but would then kill EV demand and lead to another slump. The industry needs price stability at a reasonable price level that can underpin existing production and new development without stifling EV demand.

Other issues to look out for in 2026:

- Progress at Manono – what will happen at the largest hard rock lithium deposit in the world?
- USA - progress with the US clay deposits, brines and the Carolina spodumene deposits – will these continue to develop as planned or will the US fall further behind in the EV race?
- European lithium – start up of the Keliber mine is scheduled for 2026, the first new lithium mine in Europe. Will Barroso likewise make progress and how will drilling of geothermal wells progress at the URVLP?
- Canada – continued progress at NAL/ Val d'Or, the Becancour lithium converter and Rio Tinto's (Arcadium's) Whabouchi and James Bay projects.
- Australia – restored profitability for the Australian miners? Can anything be salvaged from the Kemerton (Albemarle) and Kwinana (Tianqi/IGO) twin industrial disasters? Production restart at Bald Hill? Progress at Andover? Hopefully a smooth ramp up in lithium hydroxide production at Covalent's separate Kwinana converter and increased production from all mines.
- Chile – transition to the new JV between SQM and Codelco, NovaAndino Litio.
- Argentina has the largest confirmed lithium resource in the world. Will production continue

to grow as planned to realise that resource potential?

- Bolivia had seemed to have turned the corner and finally started some solidly based DLE projects with Chinese and Russian partners. This may have been jeopardised – yet again – by legal rulings and the change in government in 2025. What will transpire in 2026? Production start before 2030 now seems unlikely.
- Russia – progress in the Kola peninsula with the Kolmozerskoye and Polmostundrovskoye spodumene deposits. Will DLE tests from the massive Kovytko gas field lithium brines be successful? If so, Siberia is the sleeping lithium giant of the world.

Conclusion

2026 is starting out with a much brighter outlook for the lithium miners, notwithstanding the geopolitical turmoil dominating the headlines. Increased prices were vitally needed, as the lithium industry risked suffering long term retrenchment otherwise. There should now be renewed optimism in developing future projects in the USA, Australia, Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Europe. Assuming prices stay at sustainable levels, look out for a flurry of fresh announcements from the small mining companies in the first half of the year as they seek to attract capital. The established players are more likely to wait until later in the year or next year before announcing major developments.

[The Lithium Report 2025 – 2035: The Next 10 Years. Everything you need to know about upstream lithium supply.](#)

Article available on line at

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/lithium-prices-finally-recover-perspectives-2026-william-tahil-al0se>