



**Anil Sönmez**  
CEO, Almatiz



# India is a priority growth market for Almatris



*With a legacy spanning over a century in alumina expertise, Almatris has established itself as a pioneer in producing innovative, specialised alumina products and solutions. The company's unwavering commitment to sustainability and operational excellence makes it the preferred choice for high-quality alumina in the high-performance refractory and ceramics markets. Among its offerings, tabular alumina is a standout product, serving as a cornerstone for industry applications.*

*In an exclusive interview with Santosh Mahanti, Editor of Iron & Steel Review magazine, Anil Sönmez, CEO of Almatris, articulates his vision for the company's future as it navigates the evolving landscape of industries such as steel. He emphasises the importance of green technologies and advanced materials in shaping tomorrow's market. As Almatris expands its global footprint and evolves to meet market needs, this conversation highlights the strategic initiatives that position the company for success in a dynamic environment. With the steel industry facing increasing pressures to adopt sustainable practices, Sönmez shares how Almatris is positioning itself as a leader in delivering high-quality alumina solutions that meet these shifting requirements. This discussion not only highlights Almatris' strategic focus but also reinforces its mission to support partners in achieving their sustainability goals, showcasing the company's role as a pioneering force in the alumina industry.*

## **Almatris has established a distinct position for itself in the realm of specialized alumina products and solutions. Can you shed some light on the company's transformation journey?**

Almatris' journey to global leadership in specialized alumina products is one of consistent innovation, strategic growth, and more than a century of industry expertise. Since the establishment of the first calcined alumina plant in 1910, Almatris has evolved significantly, becoming a standalone company in 2004 and entering an accelerated growth phase after its acquisition by OYAK Group in 2015. This history and drive for excellence have positioned Almatris uniquely in the alumina industry.

We have operations in India since 1995. In response to the Indian Government's "Make in India" initiative, we launched an integrated tabular alumina facility in Falta in 2021, marking a major milestone in local production. Our ongoing investment

in Germany has also enhanced our product portfolio and market reach, notably through a wet attrition mill in 2021. These advancements underscore Almatris' commitment to growth, both internally and in alignment with the evolving needs of core markets. Across our eight production facilities worldwide, our multimillion-dollar internal improvement projects have been completed without any safety incidents, highlighting our team's dedication to operational excellence.

Some of these initiatives include a capacity expansion at our Arkansas plant, set to a 20% increase in our calcines production, alongside substantial upgrades at Iwakuni and significant investments into our sintered aggregates and cement operations in Rotterdam. Having a robust global footprint with dedicated employees, we can ensure reliable service for our customers around the world while managing simultaneous large-scale projects. Further, in response to strong demand and government

recognition of our contributions to the local economy, we have launched a new project—a new calcines facility in Qingdao, China, slated for operation in 2026.



Our transformation journey extends beyond operational scale to meaningful change across the industry. With our Mission NeutrAL sustainability program, launched in 2022, we are committed to achieving the lowest carbon footprint in the industry. Through innovations like Low Carbon Tabular and Calcined Aluminas and our ECO-TAB<sup>®</sup> products, we aim not only to advance our sustainability goals but also to support our partners in meeting Scope III emissions targets. Our journey is not just about having a large operational footprint or a suite of innovative products. It reflects our adaptability, willingness to change, and determination to drive transformation within the alumina industry.

In 2023, we unveiled a new brand identity, blending Almatiss' legacy with our forward-looking ambitions, embodied in our updated logo. This brand evolution reflects our focus on sustainable growth and our mission to “Innovate Alumina and Beyond for Tomorrow.” Through continued investment in people, processes, and products, we are building a robust future that positions Almatiss as a partner of choice in an ever-evolving market.

### **How does Almatiss view the growing demands of the steel industry in the coming years?**

We recognize that the steel industry is poised for significant transformation, driven by an urgent need for sustainability, technological advancement, and adaptation to regional market demands worldwide. In response, we actively engage in partnerships with industry leaders, contributing to initiatives that support more sustainable steel production globally. One key area of development is our work on advanced refractory materials for Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) processes, which offer a lower carbon alternative to traditional blast furnaces and address the sustainability needs of steel markets across various regions.

The transition to cleaner energy sources like hydrogen is expected to have a profound impact on steelmaking. As hydrogen infrastructure grows, the demand for high-performance, alumina-based refractories will likely increase, aligning with the industry's

broader carbon reduction goals. The global movement toward high-alumina refractory solutions reflects a strategic shift away from carbon-heavy materials, enabling a reduction in emissions across diverse geographies and steel-producing economies. Almatiss' wide-ranging product portfolio and strategic focus on high-quality aluminas position us well to support this industry shift.

In parallel, markets across Asia, Europe, and the Americas are each evolving at their own pace. For instance, in Asia, increased production volumes are driving the need for advanced, durable refractory products to sustain high-output operations. Meanwhile, Europe and North America are focusing on regulatory compliance and decarbonization goals, both of which necessitate innovative refractory solutions. Almatiss' global footprint and commitment to ongoing R&D ensure we can meet these varied demands while contributing to sustainable steel production on a global scale.

### **Has Almatiss taken any measures to integrate decarbonisation and digitalisation into its operations?**

Almatiss has long placed sustainability at the core of its operations, consolidating all related initiatives under our Mission NeutrAL Sustainability Program launched in 2022. This program extends beyond sustainable manufacturing practices, with an ambitious goal to deliver industry-leading low CO<sub>2</sub>e products. We are equally committed to developing products that enable our customers to lower their carbon emissions. Our ECO-TAB<sup>®</sup>, Low Carbon Tabular and Calcined Aluminas, and higher purity calcined aluminas for advanced ceramics directly support our customers in achieving both Scope 2 and Scope 3 emission goals.

To assist environmentally conscious customers in managing their carbon footprint, we provide third-party verified CO<sub>2</sub>e values across the value chain. Our vision, “Innovate Alumina and Beyond for Tomorrow,” reflects not only a goal of sustainable growth but also our commitment to a greener future for the planet and future generations.

Global operations present unique regulatory challenges, given varying environmental laws, yet all our production facilities adhere to local emissions standards for CO<sub>2</sub> and other gases. Our new tabular alumina plant in Falta exemplifies this sustainability focus, and our upcoming calcined alumina plant in Qingdao, China, is set to become a global benchmark with its advanced environmental standards. Almatiss' engineering, technology, and operations teams regularly share best practices internally, allowing us to simultaneously manage numerous global sustainability projects. These efforts range from improving primary operations' thermal efficiency and capturing waste radiant heat to recycling wastewater streams, implementing energy-efficient heat pumps, and sourcing green electricity and biofuels to reduce product carbon footprints. Together, these initiatives underscore our aspiration to be an industry benchmark for sustainability in both our operations and products.

**How do you look at the evolving market for tabular alumina in India? Do you anticipate a reduced reliance on Chinese supply? How does Almatís plan to capitalise on the burgeoning Indian refractory market?**

The alumina market is undergoing a dynamic shift, with both India and China emerging as key players in supply and consumption. India, experiencing robust economic growth, is a priority growth market for Almatís, especially as the Indian government's "Make in India" policy promotes local production. With rapid urbanization and industrial expansion driving demand in automotive and other sectors, India's passenger car market alone is projected to reach \$55 billion by 2027, while its electric vehicle (EV) market is anticipated to become the world's third-largest by 2025. This upward trajectory in local manufacturing is expected to elevate demand for domestically produced refractory materials.

China, meanwhile, remains a global leader in refractory minerals production. India's reliance on Chinese-sourced magnesia persists due to limited domestic sources, a trend likely to continue. However, as the world's fourth-largest alumina producer, India is positioned to become a top-3 producer in the future. India's attraction to Chinese refractory alumina-based minerals currently stems from short-term export cost advantages rather than quality limitations of domestic supply. As the Chinese market shifts toward export opportunities amid a slowdown, India's move toward locally made raw materials remains essential for the "Make in India" policy's success. Almatís supports this vision by investing in domestic production of tabular alumina and white aggregate expansions, which underscore our commitment to local supply chains.

The Asia-Pacific semiconductor market, encompassing India, is set for robust growth, and China's EV and battery sectors remain strong. This demand for higher-purity aluminas aligns with the requirements of high-quality applications, including technical ceramics and specialty aluminas. Almatís is well-positioned to meet these specialized needs. Since 2021, our Falta plant in India has met consistently rising demand for high-quality tabular alumina, while our Qingdao facility, established in 1998, has expanded to produce magnesium aluminate spinel aggregates. With a new calcined alumina plant set to open in 2026, these facilities strengthen our global footprint, supporting local economies in India and China alike.

The rapid growth of India's manufacturing sector creates extensive opportunities for Almatís to further its presence in the country. Almatís' strategy aligns with the Indian government's initiative to foster local production, allowing us to develop and deliver premium India-made refractory products. Through continuous investments in our Falta plant and our expanding product portfolio, Almatís is positioned to meet the refractory market's demands. By partnering closely with local industry stakeholders,

we aim to provide specialized products tailored for key sectors such as steelmaking, automotive, and infrastructure, making Almatís a strategic player in India's manufacturing expansion.



**How does Almatís plan to cope with the changing trends in the demand for alumina in the refractories market?**

Driven by a shift toward sustainable practices, the steelmaking industry is embracing new materials and processes to reduce carbon emissions. Almatís is actively participating in collaborative, publicly funded projects that advance refractory solutions for green steel production. One promising development is the Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) method, which can substantially lower emissions compared to traditional blast furnace steelmaking.

As hydrogen emerges as a cleaner energy source in steel production, we anticipate even greater demand for alumina-based refractories, particularly as the industry shifts from basic to high-alumina raw materials, which present a lower carbon footprint. Additionally, we're observing a shift from traditional brick-based to monolithic refractory linings, which offer another path to emission reductions. Almatís is well-prepared to support these shifts with our specialized product range and extensive experience, ensuring that we remain a key contributor to sustainable steel manufacturing and innovation across the industry.

**What are the latest developments in Almatís' Falta plant in West Bengal? Can you tell us a bit about the sales and overall performance of the plant in the last fiscal year?**

Almatís' Tabular Alumina plant in Falta, which commenced operations in 2021, has experienced steady growth due to India's increasing focus on local production. Sales performance has been strong, reinforcing the plant's role as a hub for high-quality tabular alumina products in India. The Falta facility is a testament to Almatís' commitment to sustainable practices, employing advanced technologies to meet stringent environmental standards. This success underscores Almatís' market strength in India and aligns with the company's dedication to supporting the nation's manufacturing ambitions through reliable, locally produced materials. ■