

[A little something from the frontlines of international industry](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Thursday 15 August 2013

Most of you will know that my day job is dealing with the weirder end of the metals market, most especially the rare earth scandium. This popped into my inbox as a result of one of those automatic alert [jobbies](#) [3]:

Guangdong Orient Zirconic Ind Sci & Tech Co. is going to spend 30 million yuan (\$4.9 million) to build facility to recycle scandium from zirconium oxychloride acid mother liquor. It will take six months to construct the facility, Orient Zirconic told Shenzhen Stock Exchange on August 10. When completed, the facility will have production capacities of 2,500 kilograms for high purity scandium oxide a year, 20 tpy for mixtures of rare earth oxides and 150 tpy for zirconium oxychloride, it said.

I don't know this particular company and have no contact with them. But those numbers all look about right, believable certainly. For I have looked at that (and many other viable ones) method of extracting scandium. It works, no doubt about it.

The thing I'd just note though is that they're going from a standing start to production in 6 months. If I were to pursue exactly the same technology here in the European Union it would take me 18 months just to get the environmental permit to proceed.

No, I don't advocate Chinese levels of environmental non-protection. But I do want to point out that such protection does come at a price: it takes much longer to do things therefore economic growth is slower than it would have been without such environmental protection. It might even be that the level of protection we have is the right amount: I really do just want to point out that it comes with a cost attached to it.

And we have all noted that economic growth has been slower in recent decades than it was in those before we imposed the current level of regulations, haven't we?

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