

Sector Reports

Life Sciences

Doing Business in Chile Guide 2025





The life sciences sector in Chile is an emerging and strategic area of development, underpinned by a rich academic base, growing research capabilities, and government initiatives to diversify the economy beyond mining and agriculture. It also provides an abundance of low-cost laboratory space. Chile ranks 53rd among the 132 economies featured in the Global Innovation Index 2021, and 1st among the 18 economies in Latin America and the Caribbean. The sector encompasses biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, diagnostics, and healthcare-related innovation.





Key Features and Strengths

1. Favorable R&D Environment

Chile has developed a solid base for research and development (R&D), particularly in biotechnology and agricultural sciences, driven by its unique ecosystems and biodiversity. The country is well-known for its research in genomics, aquaculture, and plant biotechnology.

2. Government Support and Incentives

Through agencies like [CORFO](#) (Corporación de Fomento de la Producción) and [ANID](#) (National Research and Development Agency), the Chilean government offers incentives for innovation, including grants, tax credits, and venture capital funding for startups and research institutions in life sciences.

3. Academic and Research Institutions

Chile boasts reputable universities and research centres such as:

- Universidad de Chile
- Pontificia Universidad Católica
- Fundación Ciencia & Vida

These institutions collaborate with both public and private sectors on biomedical and biotechnological research.

4. Natural Laboratories

Chile's diverse geography and isolation (e.g., Atacama Desert, Andes Mountains, and long coastline) offer ideal conditions for bioprospecting and testing. Its low prevalence of diseases and strict bioethics regulations make it attractive for clinical trials and medical research.

Sub-Sectors of Growth

1. Biotechnology

Focus areas include agricultural biotech, aquaculture genetics, and industrial enzymes. Chile is a global leader in salmon farming, which has driven biotech applications in disease resistance and sustainability.

2. Pharmaceuticals

Although Chile primarily imports pharmaceutical products, the country has a small but growing domestic production base and a regulatory framework aligned with international standards (e.g., through the ISP - Instituto de Salud Pública).



3. Medical Devices and Diagnostics

There is increasing demand for telemedicine, diagnostic kits, and health monitoring technologies, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Startups and international companies are entering the market, targeting both urban and remote populations.

4. Healthtech and Digital Health

The rise of digital health startups has brought attention to Chile as a regional hub for e-health, including electronic medical records, remote patient monitoring, and AI-based diagnostics.

Challenges

- Limited venture capital specifically for life sciences compared to tech or mining.
- Dependency on imported high-end medical technology.
- Need for stronger IP protection and commercialization pathways for university-led innovations.
- Talent drain, with many skilled researchers pursuing opportunities abroad.

Opportunities

- Regional R&D Hub for Latin America in clinical trials and biotechnology.
- Investment in public-private partnerships to translate academic research into commercial products.
- Growth of Health-tech ecosystems, especially through accelerators and international collaboration.
- Climate and sustainability-oriented biotech, such as water purification and carbon capture solutions.

Conclusion

Chile's life sciences sector is still developing but holds strong potential, driven by natural advantages, increasing R&D capacity, and supportive policies. With continued investment and collaboration, Chile could become a regional leader in biotechnology and health innovation in Latin America.