

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF

KENYA

By Philip M. Mobbs

Soda ash was the most important mineral commodity produced in Kenya. Other mineral commodities produced in Kenya included cement, fluorspar, gemstones, gold, petroleum products, and salt. The mineral industry accounted for approximately 1% of the country's gross domestic product.

Kenya's major trading partners were the European Community, Japan, and neighboring African countries. Fluorspar, petroleum products, and soda ash were the most notable sources of foreign exchange earnings. Approximately 40% of Kenya's fluorspar production was exported to the United States. Petroleum products, refined from oil imported from the Middle East, were primarily exported to neighboring African countries, particularly Uganda and Zaire. Imported crude and processed petroleum products consumed 21% of Kenya's export earnings. Mineral-related imports from the United States included iron and steel, machinery and transport equipment, phosphate rock, and processed nonferrous minerals.

Gold production was mainly artisanal. Goldenberg Co., a registered gold trading company based in Nairobi, purchased gold from the small-scale operations. Recent international interest in Kenya included Serengeti Diamonds of Canada and Jester Global Co. of South Africa who were conducting exploration on a 200-square-kilometer prospect. Newmont Mining joined with Auvista Mineral NL of Australia and Mio Migori Mining Co. Ltd. of Kenya on the Migori gold project near Kiisi. See Table 1 for estimates of recent national mineral production.

East African Portland Cement Co. (EAPC) was expanding capacity to 550,000 metric tons per year (t/yr) and converted fuel from diesel to coal. The country's two cement plants, Bamburi Portland Cement Co. Ltd. at Mombasa and EAPC at Athi River, also were responsible for production of all limestone. Gypsum was produced by Athi River Mining Ltd. High-quality gypsum was sometimes imported to supplement local production. About 20% of all cement produced was sold to neighboring countries.

Fluorspar is Kenya's second most important mineral after soda ash. It was produced from an open pit mine at Cheberen in the Kerio Valley, near Eldoret. Kenya Fluorspar Co. Ltd. operated the mine and produced an acid-grade fluorspar that contained only 10% moisture.

Soda ash was a significant source of foreign exchange earnings. Magadi Soda Co. Ltd. began to increase its production capacity by 50,000 (t/yr) to a total capacity of

300,000 t/yr. The company was augmenting an International Finance Corp. loan by funding a part of the upgrade itself. A portion of the capacity upgrade was to be attributed to improved transportation operations along the 150-kilometer line from Lake Magadi to the Nairobi-Mombasa segment of Kenya Railways Corp. track. The Kenya Railways Corp. line runs from the west near Tororo, Uganda, passes through Nairobi, and terminates at the port of Mombasa, connecting key mining districts along the route. The Magadi operation also was Kenya's largest source of crude salt.

Kenya did not produce crude petroleum. However, proceeds from petroleum products refined by Kenya Petroleum Refineries Ltd. in Mombasa made up a sizable share of Government revenues, as the Government owned 50% of the operation. Transportation of petroleum products from Mombasa to Nairobi was primarily via the pipeline of the Government-owned Kenya Pipelines Co. Ltd. However, products to be exported to Uganda reportedly were trucked across the country from Mombasa. The Government was promoting the use of the pipeline's Eldoret Terminal instead.

The Government proposed to upgrade the handling capacity of the port in Mombasa. A bulk handling facility was being built adjacent to the port.

Installed electric generating capacity totaled 820 megawatts (MW), with 604 MW derived from hydro-electric sources, 159 MW from thermal plants, and 45 MW geothermal. A hydroelectric plant was proposed for the Talal River and a 75-MW diesel plant was planned for a site near Mombasa. Additional geothermal plants were under study.

The outlook for Kenya's mineral industry is good, with the Government continuing policies directed toward increasing domestic employment and foreign earnings through mineral production projects.

Other Sources of Information

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Energy and Mines
P.O. Box 30582
Nairobi, Kenya
Telephone: (254) 2-229-261
Mines and Geological Department
Madini House, Machakos Road
P.O. Box 30009
Nairobi, Kenya
Telephone: (254) 2-541-040

TABLE 1
KENYA: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity 2/	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995 e/
Barite e/	100	100	14 3/	20 r/ 3/	20
Carbon dioxide gas, natural	4,156	4,802	5,910	5,605 r/	7,982 3/
Cement, hydraulic thousand tons	1,423	1,508	1,417	1,420 e/	1,500
Clays, kaolin 4/	--	21	7	7 e/	30 3/
Diatomite 4/	787	507	829	592 r/	577 3/
Feldspar e/ 4/	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Fluorspar (acid grade) 4/	77,402	80,630	78,725	53,400 r/	80,230 3/
Gemstones, precious and semiprecious:					
Amethyst kilograms	(5/)	(5/)	303	303 e/	310
Aquamarine do.	110	100	43	14 r/	50
Cordierite (iolite) e/	10	10	14 3/	15 r/	15
Garnet do.	90	90	31 3/	42 r/	119 3/
Ruby e/	200	123 3/	120	200 r/ 3/	1,200 3/
Sapphire e/	20	20	2,314 3/	2,310	2,300
Tourmaline do.	10	10	229	43 r/	224 3/
Gold, mine output, Au content do.	20	20	154	155 r/ e/	170
Gypsum and anhydrite e/	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
Lead, mine output, Pb content e/	--	--	396	350 r/ 3/	4 3/
Iron and steel: Steel, crude e/	20	20	20	20	20
Lime e/	11,757 3/	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Petroleum refinery products e/	16,000	17,000 r/	17,000 r/	17,000 r/	17,000
Salt: Crude, rock e/	102,000	102,000	74,669 3/	70,500 r/ 3/	71,400 3/
Soda ash	245,000	186,038	144,850	226,150 r/	218,450 3/
Stone, sand and gravel:					
Coral e/	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
Limestone do.	20	12	13	13 e/	13
Sand, industrial (glass) e/ 4/	12,300	12,300	12,300	12,300	12,300
Shale e/ 4/	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000
Vermiculite 4/	2,600	2,291	1,961	1,113 e/	457 3/
Wollastonite e/ 4/	100	100	100	-- r/ 3/	-- 3/

e/ Estimated. r/ Revised.

1/ Includes data available through Sept. 26, 1996.

2/ In addition to the commodities listed, a variety of industrial minerals and construction materials (clays, gypsum, construction sand and gravel, and crushed rock) presumably are produced, but quantity is not reported and information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output.

3/ Reported figure.

4/ The Kenya table in the 1994 Mineral Industry Surveys incorrectly reported units for this commodity as thousand tons.

5/ Less than 1/2 unit.