

NIGER

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Niger was a significant uranium producer and exported uranium concentrates primarily to France and Japan. The World Bank estimated that Niger's gross domestic product increased slightly in 1999 to \$2.1 billion despite a military coup in April (BBC News, April 10, 1999, Niger rebels take charge, accessed March 12, 1999, at URL http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_315000/31590.stm#top; World Bank, September 12, 2000, Niger at a glance, accessed October 22, 2000, via URL <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>).

Uranium mining formed a significant segment of the Nigerien economy; the decade-long decline in uranium prices, however, adversely affected uranium mining in Niger. The policy of recent years to increase production to maintain income was abandoned in 1999, and production by Société des Mines de l'Air and Compagnie Minière d'Akouta was cut back severely (Mining Journal, 1999a; Uranium Institute, October 3, 2000, Uranium production figures, accessed October 22, 2000, at URL <http://www.uilondon.org/coreissues/stats/uprod.htm>). Diversification of the mineral industry was expected by 2001 as industrial development of gold resources gets underway (Kakaki—News of Niger, January 30, 1999, Prospects for gold and oil in Niger, accessed February 25, 1999, at URL <http://www.txdirect.net/users/jmayer/kakaki/k990130.htm>). The Birimian greenstone belts in the Liptako region were the focus of gold exploration, but low gold prices had reduced exploration activity since 1997. The Government estimated that production of artisanal gold from the region was about 1 metric ton per year.

The feasibility study of the Samira Hill gold deposit on the Tiawa concession of Etruscan Resources Inc. of Canada proposed a \$23 million operation that would produce 3,000 metric tons per day of ore from two open pit mines. Proven and probably reserves of ore were estimated to be 6.57 million metric tons (Mt) grading 2.4 grams per ton (g/t) gold (Mining Journal, 1999b). A mining permit for Samira Hill was issued in November. In 1999, SEMAFO Inc. of Canada acquired 50% ownership interest in African GeoMin Mining Development Corp. of the Cayman Islands from Etruscan and in November, African GeoMin secured the rights to the Saoura concession, which included the Libiri gold deposit, from Ashanti Goldfields Co. Ltd. of Ghana and IAMGOLD Corp. of Canada. The Libiri deposit, which is about 3 kilometers southeast of the Samira Hill deposit, was estimated to contain 5.3 Mt of ore grading 2.2 g/t gold (McDougall, 1999).

The evaluation of the Koma Bangou prospect by Etruscan and the Office National des Ressources Minières estimated that contained gold resources totaled 9,600 kilograms. Development was deemed uneconomic at existing gold prices (Etruscan Resources Ltd., 2000, p. 9).

Ressources Robex Inc. of Canada and GeoAfrica Gold Corp. of Canada, which was a subsidiary of the European Pacific Group of Australia, explored the Massif de l'Air (formerly the Tafassasset North) and the Tafassasset gold prospecting license areas. The joint venture relinquished the Adoumchi and the Kissambana prospecting licenses at midyear. Anmercosa Exploration (Niger) Ltd., which was a subsidiary of AngloGold Ltd. of South Africa, discontinued operations on the Namaro gold concession with Coronation International Mining Corp. of the United Kingdom and on the Tialkam gold property with Barrick Gold Corp. EXP Resources Ltd. of Canada's negotiations with the Government and Proma Minerals A.S. of Norway to extend the time period of the Tin-Awati gold-copper concession were unsuccessful.

Production of industrial minerals was limited to a few commodities that were consumed domestically. Heidelberger Zement AG of Germany acquired Scancem International AB of Norway, which held a 77% equity interest in Société Nigérienne de Cimenterie.

The Elf Aquitaine Group of France, Esso Exploration and Production Niger Inc., Hunt Oil Co. of the United States, and TG World Energy Inc. of Canada held interests in petroleum concessions in Niger.

For more extensive coverage of the mineral industry of Niger, see the 1998 Minerals Yearbook, Volume III, Mineral Industries of Africa and the Middle East.

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Major Sources of Information

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TABLE 1
NIGER: ESTIMATED PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/ 2/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity 3/	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Cement, hydraulic	30,000	29,251 4/	30,000	30,000	30,000
Coal, bituminous	135,000	140,000	150,000 r/	145,000	135,000
Gold	1	1	1	1	1
Gypsum	1,800	1,800	1,800	2,000	2,000
Molybdenum concentrate, Mo content	10	10	10	10	10
Salt thousand metric tons	3	3	3	2 r/	2
Tin, mine output, Sn content	20	10	10	10	20
Uranium, U content	2,970 4/	3,320 4/	3,497 4/	3,731 4/	2,918 4/

r/ Revised.

1/ Table includes data available through October 22, 2000.

2/ Estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

3/ In addition to the commodities listed, phosphate rock, tungsten ore, and a variety of construction materials (clays, limestone, sand and gravel, and stone) were produced, but available information is inadequate to make estimates of output.

4/ Reported figure.