



2009 Minerals Yearbook

GABON

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF GABON

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Gabon's mineral industry was dominated by the production of petroleum and manganese. In 2009, the country ranked 7th among the world's leading producers of manganese, accounting for about 8% of world production. Crude petroleum production accounted for 77% of the country's total exports, 60% of Government revenues, and 45% of the country's gross domestic product. Other nonfuel mineral commodities produced in the country included cement, diamond, and gold. Identified mineral resources included niobium (columbium), iron ore, and phosphate rock (Jansson and others, 2009, p. 10; Corathers, 2010).

Government Policies and Programs

Gabon was one of the first countries to adhere to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which is a voluntary global compact established in 2002 that is aimed at strengthening good governance by improving economic transparency and accountability in the mining sector. The Government of Gabon began adopting and implementing the EITI principles in May 2004 by putting into place a tripartite multistakeholder group consisting of representatives from the Government, mining companies, and nongovernmental organizations. In March 2005, the Government expressed its commitment to join the EITI in a letter of intent to the International Monetary Fund. In December 2005, the Government of Gabon published its first EITI report, which covered information from 2004. This report did not provide information on the Government's share of the profit from oil production, which reportedly was estimated to have been as much as one-half of the total oil revenue. The Government of Gabon published its second EITI report in April 2007 and its third report in March 2008. Gabon started the EITI validation mission on November 16, 2009 (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2010).

Production

Data on mineral production are in table 1.

Structure of the Mineral Industry

Table 2 is a list of major mineral industry facilities.

Mineral Trade

Gabon's exports to the United States were valued at about \$1.2 billion in 2009 compared with \$2.3 billion in 2008 and \$2.2 billion in 2007. About 92% of these exports was petroleum, which was valued at \$1.1 billion, and about 5% was nonferrous metals, which were valued at \$65 million. Imports from the United States were valued at about \$170 million in 2009 compared with about \$284 million in 2008 and \$478 million in

2007. These included nearly \$75 million worth of drilling and oilfield equipment; \$5.4 million worth of excavating machinery; \$2.1 million worth of coal and other fuels; \$856,000 worth of petroleum products; and \$785,000 worth of iron and steel products (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, b).

China was one of Gabon's main trading partners. From 2004 to 2008, the value of Gabon's total exports to China increased by 350%. Petroleum accounted for about 40% of these exports, and manganese, for about 30%. The value of petroleum exports to China in 2008 (the latest year for which data were available) was \$717 million and that of manganese was \$602 million compared with \$135 million and \$91 million, respectively, in 2004 (Trade Law Center for Southern Africa, 2010).

Commodity Review

Metals

Gold.—SearchGold Resources Inc. of Canada held the exploration and mining rights for the development of the Bakoudou-Magnima gold deposit through its subsidiary Ressources Golden Gram Gabon SARL. In 2008, SearchGold had completed a feasibility study for the project's first target area, known as Zone A. Measured and indicated resources in Zone A were reported to be about 2.4 million metric tons at an average grade of 3.01 grams per metric ton gold; however, no reports concerning the progress or status of the project were published as of yearend 2009. The company planned to build an open pit mine and produce about 1,200 kilograms per year (reported as 40,000 troy ounces per year) of gold for a period of 3.5 years (SearchGold Resources Inc., 2009a, p. 2-5; 2009b).

Manganese.—In April, Compagnie Minière de l'Ogooué S.A. (Comilog), which was a subsidiary of Eramet International S.A. of France, began the construction of the Moanda Metallurgical Complex (MMC). The MMC, which was to be located within the premises of the Moanda Mine, included the construction of a metal production plant with a capacity to produce 20,000 metric tons per year (t/yr) of manganese metal and 65,000 t/yr of silicomanganese metal. The complex was to benefit from the construction of the Poubara hydroelectric powerplant, which was a project that the Government was undertaking to improve electricity output in the country. Production from MMC was scheduled to come online in late 2012 or early 2013. The company reported that improvements to the Trans-Gabon railway, in which Comilog held a 75% interest, were progressing as planned. At least one other company, Compagnie Industrielle et Commerciale des Mines de Huazhou (CICMH), was engaged in manganese exploration. CICMH, which was a joint venture of Chinese companies Citic Resources Holdings Ltd., Huazhou Mining Investment Ltd., and Ningbo Huaneng Kuangye, explored for manganese in the Bembele Mountains near the town of Ndjole (Eramet International S.A., 2009; 2010, p. 33, 44; Jansson and others, 2009, p. 11, 18).

Industrial Minerals

Cement.—Heidelberg Cement Group of Germany, which held a 75% interest in Société des Ciments du Gabon (Cimgabon), was the country's only cement producer. Cimgabon operated two cement grinding plants, one of which was located south of Libreville and the other of which was located in Franceville. The company also operated a clinker plant located east of Libreville. In 2009, Cimgabon produced 240,000 metric tons (t) of cement, or about 40% less than its production capacity of nearly 400,000 t. Cimgabon had held the monopoly on cement production until 2006 when the Government liberalized the sector and allowed for cement to be imported from foreign countries. Since then, the company had lost between 40% and 60% of its market share to other competitors mainly from Cameroon and China. Heidelberg planned to increase its production capacity in Gabon to 700,000 t; however, no further details as to when this might take place were available (Gaboneco, 2009, 2010).

Mineral Fuels

Petroleum.—Although crude petroleum was a key fuel mineral commodity to Gabon's economy, the country had no national petroleum company and relied on foreign investors to conduct petroleum exploration and production activities. Total S.A. of France held exploration and production operations in Gabon through two locally incorporated companies, Total Gabon S.A. and its subsidiary Total Participations Pétrolières Gabon. In terms of petroleum output, Total Gabon was the country's main producer. In 2009, Total's equity share of operated and nonoperated petroleum fields produced an average of 56,500 barrels per day (bbl/d) of petroleum, which represented a 6% decrease from the 60,300 bbl/d the company had produced in 2008. Such a decrease was attributed to maturing oilfields, notably Anguille, Baudroie Nord, Gonelle, Hylia, and Nord Marine; to lost production owing to a workers strike that disrupted production in July; and to the temporary shutdown of platforms following problems with gas pipelines, among other reasons. Total was in the process of analyzing 1,215 kilometers of two-dimensional seismic data in the southwestern area of the Diaba license (Jansson and others, 2009, p. 10; Total Gabon S.A., 2010).

In December, Netherlands-based Royal Dutch Shell plc (Shell) signed an agreement with United States-based Amerada Hess Corp. under which Shell would acquire Amerada's entire upstream portfolio in Gabon. The agreement, which was pending Government approval, would increase Shell's equity stake in the Rabi-Kounga Block to 52.5% from 42.5%; in the

Toucan Block, to 94.3% from 44.3%; and in the Atora Block, to 60% from 20%. The company's interest in the Ozigo exploration license would increase to 94.3% from 44.3% (Royal Dutch Shell plc, 2009).

Other petroleum companies operating in Gabon included Bowleven plc., which held a 100% equity interest in the EOY Block offshore and a 50% equity interest in the Epaemeno Block onshore, and Houston, Texas-based VAALCO Energy Inc., which held a 100% working interest in the Mutamba Iroru Onshore Block located near the coast in central Gabon, a 30.35% interest in the exploration acreage within the Etame Marin Block, and a 28.1% interest in the development areas surrounding the Avouma, the Etame, and the South Tchibala oilfields. Companies engaged in petroleum exploration included Perenco S.A. of France and Mitsubishi Corp. of Japan.

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TABLE 1
GABON: ESTIMATED PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES^{1,2}

Commodity ³	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
Cement and clinker:						
Cement, hydraulic ⁴	metric tons	260,000	260,000	228,601 ⁵	230,000	240,000
Clinker	do.	350,000	350,000	185,109 ⁵	190,000	NA
Diamond, gem and industrial	carats	500	500	500	500	500
Gold, mine output, Au content	kilograms	300	300	300	300	300
Manganese:						
Metallurgical-grade ore, gross weight (50% to 53% Mn)	thousand metric tons	2,800	2,925 ⁵	3,200	3,150 ⁵	1,950 ⁵
Pellets, battery- and chemical-grade, gross weight (82% to 85% MnO ₂) ⁵	do.	59	75	100	100	50
Total	do.	2,859 ⁵	3,000 ⁵	3,300 ⁵	3,250 ⁵	2,000 ⁵
Mn content	do.	1,342 ⁵	1,393 ⁵	1,532 ⁵	1,441 ⁵	881 ⁵
Natural gas, gross	million cubic meters	80	80	80	80	NA
Petroleum:						
Crude	thousand 42-gallon barrels	85,469 ⁵	84,738 ⁵	84,008 ⁵	85,775 ⁵	83,585 ⁵
Refinery products	do.	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	NA

do. Ditto. ¹Revised. NA Not available.

¹Estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Table includes data available through November 2, 2010.

³In addition to the commodities listed, a variety of crude construction materials (clays, sand and gravel, and stone) is also produced, but output is not reported, and available information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output.

⁴Includes cement produced from imported clinker.

⁵Reported figure.

TABLE 2
GABON: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2009

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity		Major operating companies and and major equity owners	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity
Cement		Société des Ciments du Gabon (Cimgabon) (HeidelbergCement Group through Scancem International ANS, 75%, and Government, 25%)	Cement-grinding plant at Owendo, south of Libreville	240,000.
Do.		do.	Cement-grinding plant at Franceville, southeastern Gabon	170,000.
Clinker		do.	Clinker plant at N'Toum, 40 kilometers east of Libreville	300,000.
Gold	kilograms	Artisanal miners	Eteke region	300 to 700.
Manganese		Compagnie Minière de l'Ogooué S.A. (Comilog) (Eramet International S.A., 67%; Government, 25%; other, 8%)	Open pit mine at Moanda	4,000,000 ore, gross weight.
Do.		do.	Sintering plant	600,000.
Petroleum:				
Crude	thousand 42-gallon barrels	Total Gabon S.A., 100%	Anguille	NA.
Do.	do.	Total Gabon S.A., 40%, and Royal Dutch Shell plc, 60%	Atora	NA.
Do.	do.	Total Gabon S.A., 57.5%	Avocette	NA.
Do.	do.	Total Gabon S.A., 50%	Baudroie Nord	NA.
Do.	do.	Total Gabon S.A., 100%	Gonelle	NA.
Do.	do.	Total Gabon S.A., 47.5%, and Royal Dutch Shell plc, 52.5%	Rabi Kounga	NA.
Do.	do.	Royal Dutch Shell plc., 94.3%	Toucan	NA.
Do.	do.	Total Gabon S.A., 100%	Torpille	NA.
Do.	do.	Bowleven plc, 100%	EOV Block	NA.
Do.	do.	do.	Mutamba Iroru	NA.
Do.	do.	PanAfrican Energy, 33.90%; Sasol Petroleum International, 30%; Vaalco Energy Inc., 28.1%; Sojitz Corp., 3.225%; Petro Energy Resources Corp., 2.525%	Etame Marine Block, offshore: Avouma oilfield	2,400.
Do.	do.	do.	South Tchibala	NA.
Do.	do.	do.	Ebouri oilfield (exploration stage)	NA.
Do.	do.	do.	Etame oilfield	6,570.
Do.	do.	Marathon Oil Corp., 56%; Tullow Oil plc, 25%; Devon Energy Corp. (% ownership unknown)	Tchatamba Marin oilfield	NA.
Do.	do.	do.	Tchatamba West oilfield	NA.
Do.	do.	do.	Tchatamba South oilfield	NA.
Do.	do.	PanOcean Energy Corp., operator, 92.5%	Obangue oilfield	1,800.
Do.	do.	do.	Tsiengui oilfield	1,800.
Do.	do.	PanOcean Energy Corp., operator, 90%	Remboue oilfield	NA.
Do.	do.	PanOcean Energy Corp., 31.4%	Etame Marin oilfield	2,300.
Refinery products	do.	Société Gabonaise de Raffinage (Total Gabon S.A., 58%; Government, 25%; other, 17%)	Port Gentil	8,800.

Do., do., ditto. NA Not available.