

BENIN

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Benin's mineral activity remains essentially the production of construction material and cement for local consumption, and the artisanal mining of gold. The most recent official figures (1998) show that the mining sector accounted for 5.5% of gross domestic product and employed 3% of the workforce.

Cement producers include Société des Ciments d'Onigbolo (for which limestone is quarried at Pobe) and the clinker-grinders Cimentierie du Bénin SA and Société des Ciments du Bénin; production capacity was estimated at about 875,000 t/y in a domestic market that consumed 450,000 t in 2000. Société Benino-Libyenne des Mines (Belimines) began exploitation of marble deposits at Dadjo at the end of 1984.

Gold exploration has been concentrated in two areas; Natitingou-Perma and Djougou/Alédjo-Koura, which is in the Atacora gold zone in northwestern Benin. The government has been revising its mining laws with a view to attracting mineral investment, but no significant new discoveries have been reported to give much impetus to these efforts.

The country's best known mineral potential lies in iron ore, the only non-hydrocarbon mineral found in any quantity to date. Resources at Loumbou-Loumbou and Madekali in the district of Borgou are estimated at up to 500 Mt with an iron content of 46-52%. One of the key requirements to exploiting these reserves would be the provision of electricity, and the state-owned electricity provider Société d'Eau et d'Electricite (SBEE) has a programme under way to investigate a dam at Arjarala with a 900-MW hydroelectric power station at an estimated cost of US\$150 million. If feasible, this provision of power could also improve the viability of phosphate deposits at Mekrou.

There are an estimated 5,500 Mbbl of oil reserves in the coastal sedimentary basin.

Production has declined since 1999 due to the closure of the Seme offshore oil field which produced 8,000 bbl/d from two wells. However, Zetah Oil Co. has been given a licence to redevelop the oil field and feasibility studies were under way in 2000.

The downstream oil industry is dependent on refined petroleum products imported from neighbouring Nigeria. A new oil terminal with a capacity of 55,000 m³/d of crude was opened at Cotonou at the end of 1999. It serves Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali.

The West African Gas Pipeline (involving Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo) has been in the planning stages for some time and construction is due to start in 2002. The estimated cost in 2000, when it was first scheduled for construction, was some US\$400 million. The pipeline is to carry about 120 m³/d of gas from Nigeria for sale to power generation customers in Ghana, Togo and Benin. In addition to delivering much needed energy to this part of the African continent, it is envisioned that the project will significantly contribute to the economies of the participating nations through the creation of jobs and low-cost fuel.

Mineral resource ownership is vested in the state, which grants exclusive rights for exploration and development through the Ministère des Mines, de l'Energie, et de l'Hydraulique. The Benin Mining Code (Act No. 83-003 of May 1983) is regulated by Decree 89-296, and Act No. 83-004 addresses fiscal policy that affects mineral development. The Beninese Agency for the Environment is responsible for national environmental responsibilities, in terms of Law No. 98-030 of February 1999. The administration of mineral development applications and procedures is controlled by the Office Béninois de Recherches Géologiques et Minières.