



2012 Minerals Yearbook

SYRIA

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF SYRIA

By Mowafa Taib

Syria was not a significant world supplier of minerals in 2012 owing to the armed conflict, which began as civil demonstrations in March 2011 but escalated to an all-out war between the Government and rebel forces that continued throughout 2012. The military actions resulted in wide-range destruction to commercial, industrial, and residential structures in many parts of the country and forced millions of people to flee their homes to settle in safe areas within the country and in the neighboring countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Despite the military operations in the country, production of fuel and industrial minerals continued in 2012, especially crude oil, natural gas, and phosphate rock, albeit at much lower levels than in previous years. Syria's mineral industry was restricted to fuel and industrial minerals only; no large-scale mining for metals had been attempted in the country in modern times. The list of mineral commodities that were produced in Syria in 2012 included cement, crude oil, fertilizer, gypsum, iron and steel, marble, natural crude asphalt, natural gas, salt, silica sand, and volcanic tuff (table 1).

Three kinds of economic sanctions imposed against Syria by the United States in previous years continued throughout 2012. The most comprehensive sanction was called the Syria Accountability Act of 2004; it prohibits the export of most goods containing more than 10% U.S.-manufactured component parts to Syria. Another sanction, resulting from the USA Patriot Act, was levied specifically against the Commercial Bank of Syria in 2006. The third kind of sanctions are contained in Executive Orders 13315, 13224, 13382, 13338, 13399, 13441, 13460, and 13572 from the President of the United States, which specifically deny certain Syrian citizens and entities access to the U.S. financial system because of their participation in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; their association with Al Qaida or the Taliban; and (or) their association with destabilizing activities in Iraq and Lebanon (Obama, 2011; U.S. Department of State, 2012).

As a result of the sanctions by the United States, U.S. exports to Syria decreased in value to about \$20 million in 2012 from \$230 million in 2011 and \$503 million in 2010. Similarly, the value of U.S. imports from Syria decreased to about \$20 million in 2012 from \$393 million in 2011 and \$429 million in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

The Council of the European Union (EU Council) extended its sanctions against Syria until June 2014; these sanctions included an oil embargo and other trade bans as well as restrictions on investments, financial activity, and the transport sector. Additional actions by the EU Council included freezing the assets of a number of entities and individuals associated with the violent repression in Syria, including the Central Bank of Syria (Council of the European Union, 2012).

Production

Data on mineral production are in table 1. Production of most mineral commodities decreased considerably in 2012 compared with that of 2011 owing to the armed conflict, which made it difficult to operate such production facilities as cement plants, iron and steel plants, oil wells, petroleum refineries, and mines throughout the country.

Structure of the Mineral Industry

The Government was the major shareholder in the hydrocarbon sector through its ownership of Syrian Gas Co. (SGC) and Syrian Petroleum Co. (SPC) under the umbrella of General Petroleum Corp. (GPC) of the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (MOPMR). SGC and SPC held a 50% share in all crude oil and gas projects in Syria. SGC was the state-owned natural gas company; it managed the exploitation, marketing, processing, and transportation of natural gas in Syria, whereas SPC was in charge of crude oil exploration, production, and transportation. SPC cooperated with several international oil companies, such as Chinese National Petroleum Co. (CNPC), Gulfsands Petroleum of the United Kingdom, Oil and Natural Gas Resources Corp. of India, Royal Dutch Shell plc. of the United Kingdom, and Total S.A. of France through subsidiary companies. These subsidiaries included Al Furat Petroleum Co., Deir Ez-Zour Petroleum Co., Dijla Petroleum Co., Hayan Petroleum Co., Oudeh Petroleum Co., and Syrian-Sino Alkawkab Co. (Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, 2011; General Petroleum Corp., 2012; U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013).

Law No. 26 of 2009 grants the state ownership of all surface and subsurface mineral resources within the country's borders and territorial waters. Law No. 91 of January 24, 2010, designates the General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources (GEGMR) as the Government agency in charge of all mining and quarrying activities in the country. Under law No. 91, the General Company for Marble and Asphalt as well as the Directorates of Salt Mines and Silica Sands at the General Company for Phosphate and Mines (GECOPHAM) were dissolved and their functions were assigned to the GEGMR. Except for phosphate rock production, which is carried out by the GECOPHAM, the GEGMR carries out all mining activities in Syria directly or through private contractors. In 2011 (the latest year for which comprehensive data were available), the GEGMR issued 768 permits for building and construction materials and employed more than 2,000 people (General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources 2011, 2012, 2013).

The Ministry of Industry is responsible for the cement and steel industries through several state-owned enterprises that include the General Organization for Cement and Building Materials (GOCBM), the General Fertilizers Co., and the

General Company for Iron and Steel Products (Hadeed Hama). In 2010, privately operated local companies began quarrying for several industrial mineral commodities, which are used as building materials, such as basalt, celestial sand, clays, dolomite, iron oxides, limestone (for cement), marble, sandstone, silica sand, and volcanic tuff. Privately operated cement and iron and steel plants were established based on Investment Law No. 10 of 1991. The law and its amendment are intended to enhance the flow of foreign direct investment into the country and to allow for the private sector to take a bigger stake in the economic development of the country, which had been dominated by state-owned enterprises. The implementation of that law can be subject to political influence and lobbying efforts, however. Some of the companies that were established under Investment Law No. 10 are Al-Badia Cement Co. J.S.C. Al Wahib Group, Arabian Steel Co (ASCO), Hmisho Steel S.A., International Company for Steel Rolling, Joudco Steel Ltd., Lafarge Cement Syria S.A., Royal Steel Co., and Syria Steel and Iron Co. (SALB) (table 2; U.S. Department of State, 2011; Lafarge Cement Syria S.A., 2012).

Commodity Review

Metals

Iron and Steel.—According to World Steel Association's latest statistics, crude steel production in Syria decreased to 10,000 metric tons (t) in 2012 from 70,000 t in 2011 and hot-rolled steel decreased to 130,000 t from 890,000 t in 2011. The country's imports of semifinished and finished steel products, which exceeded 2 million metric tons per year (Mt/yr) in the period between 2005 and 2011, decreased to 635,000 t in 2012. Similarly, imports of ingots and semis decreased to 266,000 t from 901,000 t in 2011, flat and long steel products, to 210,000 t and 128,000 t, respectively, in 2012 from 616,000 t and 371,000 t, respectively, in 2011. Apparent steel use per capita dropped to 30 kilograms (kg) in 2012 from 95 kg in 2011. The decrease in iron and steel output and trade was attributed to a sharp decrease in construction sector activity and to the disruption of trade with neighboring countries because of the military operations in many parts of the country (World Steel Association, 2013, p. 2, 34, 55, 60, 65, 70, 78, 87).

Industrial Minerals

Cement.—The country's newest cement plant, Al Badia cement at Abu As Shamat, which was owned and operated by Al Badia Cement J.S.C., produced 907,000 t of clinker and 916,000 t of cement in 2012 compared with 900,000 t of cement in 2011. The plant commenced production in February 2011 and had the capacity to produce 1.6 Mt/yr of cement (Al Badia Cement J.S.C., 2012, p. 12; 2013, p. 13).

The GOCBM, which owned and operated nine state-owned cement plants throughout the country, reported a decrease in cement production of 62%, on average, at its plants in 2012. The company's output decreased to 1,051,000 t in 2012 from 2,752,000 t in 2011. The company attributed the sharp decrease in output to the Western sanctions that caused a shortage in foreign currency needed to buy production components, such

as clinker, from abroad. The company's report mentioned other possible reasons for the decrease in production, however, such as the disruption of the electricity supply to some plants as well as destruction of buildings and looting of equipment from other plants (Aliqtisadi Souria, 2013).

Phosphate Rock.—According to GECOPHAM, phosphate rock production in Syria decreased by about 57% to 1.53 million metric tons (Mt) in 2012 from 3.54 Mt in 2011. Subsequently, phosphate rock exports decreased by 54% to 1.31 Mt from 2.85 Mt in 2011. Local sales of phosphate rock increased by 588% to 172,000 t from about 25,000 t in 2011. The Syrian phosphate rock industry faced severe conditions in the region, which included disruption in production and transportation because of the ongoing war within the country. Syria, which held 1.8 billion metric tons of phosphate rock reserves and ranked its phosphate rock industry as the sixth largest national industry based on the export value, had to prepare for sanctions on phosphate rock exports. In 2012, the European Union (EU), which received about 40% of Syria's phosphate rock exports, considered banning trade in Syrian phosphate rock exports, but it did not proceed with this option (General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources, 2012, 2013).

Mineral Fuels

Natural Gas and Petroleum.—Crude oil production decreased by 50% to 164,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2012 from 327,000 bbl/d in 2011, which was a 14% decrease from the 380,000 bbl/d average production reported in 2010. The volume of crude oil production was less than one-half of the pre-war production level. Dry natural gas production decreased by 13% to 7.6 billion cubic meters in 2012 from 8.7 billion cubic meters in 2011. The decrease in crude oil and natural gas production was attributed to the suspension of activity by international oil companies, such as the CNPC, Gulsands, Shell, and Total, because of sanctions and the Government losing control of most of the oilfields in northeastern Syria. In 2012, the Government estimated that the Syrian petroleum sector lost about \$4 billion because of the sanctions imposed on the trade of petroleum products (Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, 2012; BP p.l.c., 2013, p. 8, 22; Petroleum Economist, 2013).

Syria's proved oil reserves were estimated to be 2.5 billion barrels by yearend 2012. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated that the Levant Basin province, where the largest oilfield discoveries—the Tamar and the Leviathan fields—were found to contain about 3.5 trillion cubic meters of recoverable gas and about 1.7 billion barrels of technically recoverable oil. Syria trailed other countries in the region in developing its offshore oil and gas resources. The country's first offshore licensing round in 2007 received only one bid. Syrian officials expected that the offshore discoveries made in the Mediterranean Sea along the coasts of Cyprus, Egypt, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and Israel, however, would make Syrian offshore blocks more attractive. On March 24, 2011, the MOPMR opened a second international offshore licensing round. The round was originally scheduled for closure by October 2011, but was then rescheduled twice. As of yearend 2012, no new date for completion of the bid round

was announced (U.S. Geological Survey, 2010; U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013).

State-owned Syrian Company for Oil Transportation (SCOT) was in charge of Syria's crude oil pipelines. The main internal pipelines included an export pipeline from SPC's northeastern oilfields to the Tartous Terminal with a connection to the Homs refinery; a refined products pipeline connected the Homs refinery to Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia; an offshoot line from the Thayyem and other fields to the T-2 pumping station on the old Iraq Petroleum Co. pipeline; and another offshoot line from the Al Ashara and El-Ward fields to the T-2 pumping station. In December 2011, the Homs refinery pipeline was sabotaged by rebels trying to disrupt the country's supply of crude oil. Other pipelines were also damaged by the war, including the Rumailan oilfield pipeline, which was hit several times during 2012, and the Jbaisa gas pipeline (Petroleum Economist, 2013, p. 50–51; U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013).

In the summer of 2011, Iran, Iraq, and Syria signed a memorandum of understanding on laying a 5,000-kilometer pipeline, to be named the Islamic Gas Pipeline. The proposed pipeline would transport gas resources from Iran's South Pars field and would extend through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon and to Europe under the Mediterranean Sea. Iran had suggested that the Islamic Gas Pipeline could serve as an alternative to the EU-backed Nabucco pipeline, which was set to supply Europe with gas resources by way of Turkey and Austria. The estimated cost of the Islamic Gas Pipeline project was \$10 billion, and it was expected to be in operation by 2016 (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013).

The war and sanctions had an adverse effect on Syrian hydrocarbon sector activity, including development, exploration, export, production, transportation, and distribution. As the war continued in the country, Syria's prospect of becoming a significant energy transit country to Iraq, the Mediterranean area, and Europe was severely diminished. Additionally, the country's ability to develop its share of crude oil and natural gas resources, which are located offshore in the Mediterranean Sea, was also weakened (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2013).

Outlook

Most of the international investors who pulled out of Syria following the deterioration of the safety and security situation throughout the country as well as the sanctions imposed on Government agencies, private companies, and individuals, continued to stay out of the country in 2012 and are expected to remain so until the military and political conflicts are resolved. Syria's economy is expected to shrink by 15% of the gross domestic product in 2013 as the civil war that had been ongoing for 3 years continues to severely damage the country's infrastructure and displace more people. With crude oil production expected to decrease further to 20,000 bbl/d in 2013 from more than 380,000 bbl/d in 2010 (which is 5% of previous levels of production) and phosphate rock output to be reduced by one-half of what it was in 2011, the outlook for the mineral

industry is likely to remain negative in the near future (Butter, 2013, p. 32; Petroleum Economist, 2013, p. 50).

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TABLE 1
SYRIA: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES¹

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
METALS						
Steel: ^e						
Crude	70	70	70 ²	70 ^r	10	
Manufactured ³	510	760	700	890 ^r	130	
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS						
Asphalt	120	132	157	81 ^r	13	
Cement, hydraulic	5,646	5,176	6,000	5,000 ^r	4,000	
Gypsum	573	403	540	559 ^r	328	
Nitrogen:						
N content of ammonia	165	180	169	85 ^r	50 ^e	
N content of urea	110	119	116	70 ^r	61 ²	
Phosphate:						
Phosphate rock, mine output:						
Gross weight	2,629	2,128	3,167	3,541 ^r	1,534 ²	
P ₂ O ₅ content (30%)	789	740	950	1,062 ^r	460 ²	
P ₂ O ₅ equivalent:						
Phosphatic fertilizers	164	150	176	85 ^r	85	
Phosphoric acid ^e	100	100	61	50 ^r	50	
Salt	89	78	81	71 ^r	34	
Sand and gravel	1,621	1,382	1,445	4,956 ^r	1,103	
Stone:						
Dolomite, refractory grade ⁴	50,000 ^e	50,000 ^e	53,260	35,698 ^r	21,222	
Gravel and crushed rock ⁴	340 ³	416 ³	394	817 ^r	300 ^e	
Marble materials	299	270	300	173 ^r	80	
Marble blocks	thousand square meters	283	301	218	124 ^r	123
Volcanic tuff	901	958	910	809 ^r	502	
Sulfur:						
Byproduct of petroleum and natural gas	26	25	26	26 ^e	26	
Sulfuric acid: ^e						
Gross weight	360	360	166 ²	83 ^r	40	
S content	117	117	54	27 ^r	13	
MINERAL FUELS AND RELATED MATERIALS						
Gas, natural:						
Gross ^e	million cubic meters	7,574 ²	7,948 ²	8,000	9,000	9,000
Dry	do.	5,300	5,600	800 ^r	8,700 ^r	7,600
Natural gas plant liquids ^e	thousand 42-gallon barrels	3,650	3,650	3,650	3,650	1,800
Petroleum:						
Crude	do.	145,270	146,365	140,525	119,355 ^r	59,860
Refinery products:						
Liquefied petroleum gas ^e	do.	1,700 ^r	1,700 ^r	1,715 ²	1,700	1,000
Gasoline	do.	11,339	11,589	12,958	13,000 ^e	10,000 ^e
Naphtha	do.	6,409	4,072	7,080	7,000 ^e	5,000 ^e
Kerosene and jet fuel	do.	1,781	1,580	3,248	3,200 ^e	3,200 ^e
Distillate fuel oil	do.	27,863	29,689	29,346	30,000 ^e	20,000 ^e
Residual fuel oil	do.	29,142	27,415	33,653	33,000 ^e	20,000 ^e
Asphalt ^e	do.	3,390 ²	2,898 ²	3,000	3,000	2,000
Other ^e	do.	3,500	3,500	688 ²	1,000	1,000
Total	do.	85,100 ^r	82,400 ^r	91,700	91,900 ^e	62,200 ^e

^eEstimated; estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown. ^rRevised. do. Ditto.

¹Table includes data available through December 31, 2013.

²Reported figure.

³Mostly from imported crude and semimanufactured steel.

⁴Converted to thousand metric tons from thousand cubic meters by multiplying by a factor of 2.7.

TABLE 2
SYRIA: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2012

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity		Major operating companies and major equity owners	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity
Asphalt		General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources (GEGMR) (Government, 100%)	Al Bishri, Dayr az Zawr, and Kafriyah, Lattakia	100
Cement		Adra Cement and Building Materials Co. ¹	Adra	1,500
Do.		Al-Badia Cement Co. J.S.C. (Al Muhaidib Holding Co., 29.5%; Syrinvest Holding B.V., 26%; public stockholders, 15%; Menaf S.A.S., 12%; Ziad Al Zaim, 7.5%; Al Fozan Holding Co., 5%)	Abu As-Shamat	1,600
Do.		Al-Hasakeh Cement L.L.C. (Guris Holdings, 100%)	Clinker mill at Al-Hasakeh	700
Do.		Al-Shahaba Cement and Building Materials Co. ¹	Sheikh Said, Aleppo	740
Do.		do.	Maslamieh, Aleppo	220
Do.		Arabian Cement Co. ¹	do.	876
Do.		Guris Raqqa Cement Co. (Guris Holdings, 100%)	Clinker mill at Raqqa	1,500
Do.		Lafarge Cement Syria (Lafarge S.A., 98.67%, and Mas Economic Group S.A., 1.33%)	Ayn Al-Arab, Aleppo	2,600
Do.		Military Housing Cement Group (Government, 100%)	Musselemieh	336
Do.		Rastan Cement and Building Materials Co. ¹	Rastan	130
Do.		The Syrian Company for Cement and Building Materials ¹	Hama cement plant 1	1,330
Do.		do.	Hama cement plant 2	328
Do.		do.	Hama cement plant 3	1,200
Do.		Tartous Cement and Building Materials Co. ¹	Tartus	1,825
Gypsum		General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources (GEGMR) (Government, 100%)	Ar Reqqah, Jayrud, and Lattakia	573
Marble		General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources (GEGMR) (Government, 100%)	Zobar, Lattakia, and Sabboura	600
Natural gas	million cubic meters	Al Furat Petroleum Co. [Syrian Petroleum Co, 50%, and a consortium of Syria Shell Petroleum Development B.V., Himalaya Energy Services BV, and China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC), 50%]	Processing plant at Omar field	2,400
Do.	do.	Ebla Petroleum Co. [Suncor Energy Inc., 50%, and General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%]	Ash Shaer and Cherrife	2,500
Do.	do.	Syrian Gas Co. (Government, 100%)	Arak	13,770
Do.	do.	do.	Dubayat	14,872
Do.	do.	do.	Processing plant at Deir ez-Zor	4,750
Do.	do.	do.	Processing plant at Palmyra	2,200
Do.	do.	do.	Processing plant at Jebissa	1,060
Do.	do.	do.	Processing plant at Suwaidiyah	240
Do.	do.	do.	Abu Rabah, Al-Fayed North, Qumqum, Bilas, Al-Rasm, and Abu Al Dhuhur	1,825
Nitrogen:				
Ammonia ²		General Fertilizers Co. (Government, 100%)	Homs	300
Urea		do.	do.	330
Fertilizers		do.	do.	200
Petroleum:				
Crude	thousand 42-gallon barrels	Al Bou Kamal Petroleum Co. [General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%, and Tatneft Oil Co., 50%]	Al Kishima oilfield	365
Do.	do.	Al-Furat Petroleum Co. [General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%; Syria Shell Petroleum Development B.V., 31.25%; Himalaya Energy Syria BV, 18.75%]	Al Izba, Al Ward, Galban, Jarnof/Saban, Maleh/Azraq, Omar/Omar North, Sijan, Tanak, and Thayyam fields	43,800
Do.	do.	Deir Ezzor Petroleum Co. [General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%, and Total S.A., 50%]	al-Mazraa, Attala North Jafra, Qahar, Tabiyeh fields	10,950
Do.	do.	Dijla Petroleum Co. [General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%, and Gulfsands Petroleum, p.l.c., 50%]	Khurbet East field	18,250

See footnotes at end of table.

TABLE 2—Continued
 SYRIA: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2012

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity		Major operating companies and major equity owners	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity
Petroleum—Continued				
Crude— Continued	thousand 42-gallon barrels	Oudeh Petroleum Co. [General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%, and China Petroleum and Chemical Corp. (Sinopec), 50%]	Khurbet East field	7,300
Do.	do.	Syria-Sino Al Kawkab Oil Co. [General Petroleum Corp. (GPC), 50%, and China Petroleum and Chemical Corp. (Sinopec), 50%]	Oudeh field	3,650
Do.	do.	Syrian Petroleum Co. (Government, 100%)	Jebissa, Karatchok, Rumailan, and Suwaydiyah fields	73,000
Refined	do.	Banias Refinery Co. (Government, 100%)	Banias	48,545
Do.	do.	Homs Refinery Co. (Government, 100%)	Homs	39,055
Phosphate rock		General Company for Phosphate and Mines (GECOPHAM) (Government, 100%)	Alsharqiya (A and B Mines)	2,575
Do.		do.	Khunayfis	1,000
Phosphatic fertilizers		General Fertilizers Co. (Government, 100%)	Homs	450
Phosphoric acid		do.	do.	100
Salt		General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources (GEGMR) (Government, 100%)	Dayr az Zawr	72
Steel:				
Billet		General Company for Iron and Steel Products (Hadeed Hama) (Government, 100%)	Hama	70
Rolled		Al Wahib Group	Tartus	100
Do.		Arabian Steel Co. (ASCO)	Jableh	300
Do.		General Company for Iron and Steel Products (Hadeed Hama) (Government, 100%)	Hama	78
Do.		Hmisho Steel S.A.	Latakia	500
Do.		International Company for Steel Rolling	Hessya	300
Do.		Joudco Steel Ltd.	do.	150
Do.		Middle East Steel Industries	Yabroud	140
Do.		Orient Co.	Aleppo	300
Do.		Syria Steel and Iron Co. (SALB)	Adra	250
Sulfur	metric tons	Homs Refinery Co.	Homs	40,000
Do.	do.	do.	Processing plant at Suwaydiyah	7,410
Do.	do.	Syrian Petroleum Co. (Government, 100%)	Processing plant at Jebissa	7,300
Sulfuric acid		General Fertilizers Co. (Government, 100%)	Homs	406
Volcanic tuff		General Establishment of Geology and Mineral Resources (GEGMR) (Government, 100%)	Quarries at Daraa, Assowaida, Al Hasakah, and Arraqah	1,000

Do., do. Ditto.

¹Subsidiary of the General Organization of Cement and Building Materials (GOCBM), which is 100% Government owned.

²Expressed in nitrogen equivalent.