



2023 Minerals Yearbook

CUBA [ADVANCE RELEASE]

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World rankings for mineral production, shares of world production, and reserves presented in this chapter are derived from the referenced sources. Production data in this chapter may differ from data in other sources because of differences in the date of reporting.

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF CUBA

By Yadira Soto-Viruet

In 2023, Cuba was estimated to rank sixth among the world's leading producers of zeolites (accounting for about 7% of world production) and seventh among the world's leading producers of cobalt (accounting for about 1% of world production).

Other nonfuel mineral commodities produced in the country included bentonite, cement, feldspar, gypsum, kaolin, lead, lime, limestone, marble, salt, silica sand, raw steel, sulfuric acid, and zinc. Cuba also produced mineral fuels, such as crude petroleum and natural gas (table 1; Ewing, 2025; Williams, 2025).

During the year, mainly owing to the country's weakening import capacity and fuel shortages, all of Cuba's economic activities continued to decrease, including those of the agricultural sector, the manufacturing sector, and the trade sector. The fuel shortages led to power outages and blackouts throughout the country, which adversely affected production facilities and households. All these factors negatively affected most economic activities in Cuba, including those of the agricultural sector, the manufacturing sector, and the trade sector. Cuba's slow economic growth throughout the year was also attributable in part to the prevailing socioeconomic and political crisis in Venezuela—a country which continued to be one of Cuba's main trading partners (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023, p. 1–2; Frank, 2023).

Minerals in the National Economy

In 2023, Cuba's real gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 1.9% compared with an increase of 1.9% in 2022 (revised). The construction sector and industrial manufacturing sector (excluding the sugar industry) accounted for 8% each of the country's GDP, whereas the mining and quarrying sector made only a minor contribution of about 0.4%. The country employed 21,400 people in the mining and quarrying sector in 2023, which represented a decrease of 2.7% compared with that in 2022. Employment in the mining and quarrying sector continued to account for less than 1% of the total employment in the country (Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información, 2024a, p. 10, 13; 2024b, p. 11).

Production

In 2023, estimated zinc production in the country increased by 12% to 58,000 metric tons (t) from 52,000 t in 2022. The increase in estimated zinc production was attributed to the increase in production at the Castellanos Mine; this mine was owned by Empresa Minera del Caribe Santa Lucía S.A. (Emincar), which was the only producer of lead and zinc in the country. During the year, the production of crude petroleum decreased by 44% (estimated); lime, by 27%; cement, by 24%; cobalt, by 16%; nickel cobalt sulfide, by 15% (estimated); raw steel, by 13%; and sulfuric acid, by 10%. Data on mineral production are in table 1.

Structure of the Mineral Industry

Most mining operations in Cuba were Government owned or were joint ventures with the Government. Nickel and cobalt were produced in the country by Government-owned Empresa de Níquel Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara and Moa Nickel S.A., which was a joint venture between the Government and Sherritt International Corp. of Canada (Sherritt) (50% each). Lead and zinc were produced by Emincar, a joint venture between Government-owned Geominera S.A. (51%) and Trafigura Group Pte. Ltd. of Singapore (49%). Table 2 is a list of major mineral facilities.

Mineral Trade

In 2023, the total value of Cuba's exports decreased to about \$63.0 million¹ from \$87.0 million in 2022, and the total value of imports decreased to about \$359.0 million from \$393.0 million in 2022. During the year, mining products accounted for about 33% of Cuba's total exports. Canada continued to be Cuba's major export partner, receiving 31% of the country's total exports, by value, in 2023; followed by China and Spain (17% each). Venezuela continued to supply 18% of Cuba's total imports, by value; followed by Spain (14%) and China (12%) (Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información, 2024c, p. 10–16).

Commodity Review

Metals

Cobalt and Nickel.—Moa Nickel continued to mine lateritic ore by open pit methods and to process it into mixed sulfide precipitate (MSP) that contains nickel and cobalt at its facilities in Holguin Province. The MSP was transported by ocean freight to Canada and then by rail to Sherritt's refining facilities in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada, to produce cobalt and nickel. As of 2023, Moa Nickel's mined ore came from Camarioca Norte, Camarioca Sur, Cantarrana, La Delta, Moa Occidental, Moa Oriental, Playa la Vaca-Zona Septentrional II, Santa Teresita, and Yagrumaje Oeste mining concessions. As of December 31, total proven and probable mineral reserves at Moa Nickel were reported to be 114.1 million metric tons at average grades of 1.01% nickel and 0.12% cobalt. Sherritt reported that Moa Nickel's mine life was estimated to be about 25 years (Sherritt International Corp., 2023a, p. 21; 2023b, p. 7).

In 2023, Sherritt's total reported production of refined nickel and cobalt from imported MSP from Cuba was 28,672 t and 2,876 t, respectively, compared with 32,268 t and 3,368 t, respectively, in 2022. The company reported that it planned to produce between 30,000 and 32,000 t of refined nickel and

¹Where necessary, values have been converted from Cuban peso (CUP) to U.S. dollars (US\$) at the annual average exchange rate of CUP25.00=US\$1.00 for 2023 and 2022.

between 3,100 and 3,400 t of cobalt from imported MSP from Moa Nickel in 2024 (Sherritt International Corp., 2023b, p. 3–4).

Sherritt also continued its expansion program to increase Moa Nickel's MSP production capacity by 20% from its current capacity of 6,500 metric tons per year (t/yr) of contained nickel and cobalt. The expansion program included the construction of a new slurry preparation plant, which was completed in the fourth quarter of 2023, and the expansion of the Moa processing plant, which was expected to be completed by yearend 2024. The company planned to ramp up MSP production to the new capacity created by the expansion program by 2025 (Sherritt International Corp., 2023a, p. 6, 77).

Iron and Steel.—The Empresa Siderúrgica Jose Martí, also known as Antillana de Acero, continued with the modernization and expansion program at its steel plant. The program, a collaborative effort between Cuba and Russia, consisted of two phases. For phase 1, the company inaugurated a new electric arc furnace, which was expected to begin production in early 2024 and to produce about 62,000 t of billets. Work was underway for phase 2, which included the installation of a new rolling mill that was expected to have the capacity to produce about 226,000 t/yr of steel bars. The company expected to complete its modernization and expansion program in 2024 (table 2; Romero, 2023).

Industrial Minerals

Cement.—The Empresa de Cemento 26 de Julio continued with its modernization project at the Nuevitas plant, located in Camaguey Province. The project, which was begun in 2021, was expected to decrease the rate of fuel and energy consumption and dust emissions and to increase the annual production capacity at the plant. The modernization project was expected to be completed by 2025 (Prensa Latina, 2023).

Outlook

Cuba's GDP for 2024 was forecasted to increase by about 1.3% (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024). The country's mining and quarrying sector is expected to continue to be a minor contributor to the economy and to be dominated by the production of nickel and cobalt. The country's economic growth is expected to continue to be affected by Cuba's weakening import capacity, including that of fuel and food. The country is also likely to continue to be affected by fuel shortages in 2024, which are expected to cause power outages and blackouts and affect all of Cuba's economic activities, including in the agricultural sector and the manufacturing sector (Frank and Acosta, 2023).

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TABLE 1
CUBA: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES¹

(Metric tons, gross weight, unless otherwise specified)

Commodity ²	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
METALS					
Cobalt, mine, Co content ^e	3,600 ^r	3,800 ^r	3,800 ^r	3,700	3,100
Iron and steel, raw steel	230,000	185,000	231,000	200,415 ^r	175,000
Lead, mine, Pb content ^e	35,000	34,000	29,000	33,000	35,000
Nickel, Ni content:					
Mine, laterite ore	48,900	49,700 ^r	46,800	46,200	43,000
Intermediate, nickel cobalt sulfide ^e	37,000	34,800	34,400	35,200	30,000
Zinc, mine, Zn content ^e	60,000	60,000	45,000	52,000	58,000
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS					
Abrasives, volcanic ash	38,800	38,800	17,900	17,300	17,000 ^e
Cement, hydraulic	thousand metric tons	1,407	1,015	817	680
Clay:					
Bentonite	504	486	517	290	300 ^e
Kaolin	2,100	2,000	1,400	500	500
Feldspar, mine	2,100	14,100	17,800	5,900	6,000 ^e
Gypsum, mine	thousand metric tons	66	62	53	33
Lime	40,500	36,900	29,500	21,600	15,700
Salt	thousand metric tons	210	226	205	196
Sand and gravel, industrial, silica sand	19,700	22,500	14,600	6,900	7,000 ^e
Stone, sand and gravel, construction:					
Sand and gravel, sand, calcareous ³	thousand metric tons	2,300	3,300	1,800	1,200
Stone:					
Crushed:					
Limestone	do.	800	500	400	-- ^e
Other, unspecified ³	do.	5,400	6,000	4,500	3,000
Other, size and shape unspecified, marble ³	16,000	18,000	21,000	7,000	7,000 ^e
Sulfur, compounds, sulfuric acid	thousand metric tons	969	952	853	884
Zeolites	120,800	103,300	83,400	77,500	78,000 ^e
MINERAL FUELS AND RELATED MATERIALS					
Natural gas, marketable	thousand cubic meters	951,100	894,800	863,500	843,500
Petroleum, crude ⁴	thousand 42-gallon barrels	17,000	17,000	18,000	18,000
					10,000 ^e

^eEstimated. ^rRevised. do. Ditto. NA Not available. -- Zero.

¹Table includes data available through May 31, 2024. All data are reported unless otherwise noted. Estimated data and some reported data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²In addition to the commodities listed, nickel ammoniacal liquor precipitate, nickel oxide sinter, some additional construction materials, and petroleum refinery products may have been produced, but available information was inadequate to make reliable estimates of output.

³Units of measure were converted to metric tons from cubic meters. Data are rounded to no more than two significant digits.

⁴Data may include mixtures of other derivatives that are added to crude petroleum to reduce its viscosity.

TABLE 2
CUBA: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2023

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity		Major operating companies and major equity owners	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity ^c
Cement, hydraulic		Cementos Cienfuegos S.A.	Cienfuegos Plant, Cienfuegos, Cienfuegos Province	1,700
Do.		Empresa Mixta Cementos Curazao N.V.	Mariel Plant, Mariel, Artemisa Province	1,500
Do.		Empresa de Cemento 26 de Julio [Grupo Empresarial de Cemento (GECEM) (Government, 100%)]	Nuevitas Plant, Nuevitas, Camaguey Province	600
Do.		Empresa de Cemento Mártires de Artemisa [Grupo Empresarial de Cemento (GECEM) (Government, 100%)]	Artemisa Plant, Artemisa, Artemisa Province	600
Do.		Empresa de Cemento Siguaney [Grupo Empresarial de Cemento (GECEM) (Government, 100%)]	Siguaney Plant, Siguaney, Sancti Spiritus Province	150
Cobalt, mine, Co content		Empresa de Níquel Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara (Government, 100%)	Punta Gorda Mine Moa, Holguin Province	NA
Do.	metric tons	do.	Punta Gorda Smelter Moa, Holguin Province	600
Do.		Moa Nickel S.A. (Government, 50%, and Sherritt International Corp., 50%)	Moa Bay Mine and processing plant ¹ at Moa, Holguin Province	4
Gypsum, mine		Empresa de Materiales de la Construcción de Ciego de Ávila (AVILMAT)	Mine at Punta Alegre, Ciego de Avila Province	NA
Lead, mine, Pb content		Empresa Minera del Caribe (Emincar) [Geominera S.A. (Government, 100%), 51%, and Trafigura Group Pte. Ltd., 49%]	Castellanos Mine and processing plant, Minas de Matahambre, Pinar del Rio Province	35
Natural gas, marketable	million cubic meters	Empresa de Perforación y Extracción de Petróleo del Centro (EPEP-C) (Government, 100%)	Oilfields at the northern coast between Havana and Cardenas, primarily Mayabeque Province	1,000
Do.	do.	Sherritt International Corp. (gross working-interest production in production-sharing contracts with the Government)	Puerto Escondido and Yumuri ² Oilfields	NA
Nickel, mine, Ni content		Empresa de Níquel Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara (Government, 100%)	Punta Gorda Mine Moa, Holguin Province	NA
Do.		do.	Punta Gorda Smelter Moa, Holguin Province	31
Do.		Moa Nickel S.A. (Government, 50%, and Sherritt International Corp., 50%)	Mine and processing plant at Moa, Holguin Province	35
Petroleum:				
Crude	thousand 42-gallon barrels	Empresa de Perforación y Extracción de Petróleo del Centro (EPEP-C) (Government, 100%)	Oilfields at the northern coast between Havana and Cardenas, primarily Mayabeque Province	10,000
Do.	do.	Sherritt International Corp. (gross working-interest production in production-sharing contracts with contracts with the Government)	Puerto Escondido and Yumuri ² Oilfields	5,000
Refinery products	do.	Unión Cuba-Petróleo (CUPET) (Government, 100%)	Camilo Cienfuegos refinery, Cienfuegos, Cienfuegos Province	23,700
Do.	do.	do.	Hermanos Díaz refinery, Santiago de Cuba, Santiago de Cuba Province	8,000
Do.	do.	do.	Ñico López refinery, City of Havana	16,000
Do.	do.	do.	Sergio Soto refinery, Cabaiguan, Sancti Spiritus Province	NA

See footnotes at the end of the table.

TABLE 2—Continued
CUBA: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2023

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	Major operating companies and major equity owners	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity ^e
Raw steel	Empresa Siderúrgica José Martí [Grupo Empresarial de la Industria Sidero Mecanica (GESIME) (Government, 100%)]	Plant at Cotorro, La Havana Province	170
Do.	Empresa de Aceros Inoxidables de las Tunas (ACINOX) [Grupo Empresarial de la Industria Sidero Mecanica (GESIME) (Government, 100%)]	Plant at Las Tunas, Las Tunas Province	60
Sand, silica	Empresa de Materiales de la Construcción de Sancti Spíritus (EMCSS)	Algaba quarry, Sancti Spiritus Province	50
Sulfuric acid	Moa Nickel S.A. (Government, 50%, and Sherritt International Corp., 50%)	Plant at Moa, Holguin Province	2
Zeolites	Empresa Geominera Camaguey (Government, 100%)	El Chorillo plant, Camaguey Province	75
Do.	Empresa Geominera del Centro (Government, 100%)	Tasajeras plant, Villa Clara Province	75
Do.	Empresa Geominera Oriente (Government, 100%)	San Andres plant, Holguin Province	75
Zinc, mine, Zn content	Empresa Minera del Caribe (Emincar) [Geominera S.A. (Government, 100%), 51%, and Trafigura Group Pte. Ltd., 49%]	Castellanos Mine and processing plant, Minas de Matahambre, Pinar del Rio Province	55

^eEstimated. Do., do. Ditto. NA Not available.

¹Included the Camarioca Norte, the Camarioca Sur, the Cantarrana, the La Delta, the Moa Occidental, the Moa Oriental, the Playa La Vaca-Zona Septentrional II, the Santa Teresita, and the Yagrumaje Oeste mining concessions.

²Crude petroleum and natural gas production ceased on March 20, 2021, after the term of Puerto Escondido and Yumuri production-sharing contract expired on March 19, 2021.