

HAITI

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Haiti is regarded as the Western hemisphere's poorest country, where a shrinking economy and growing population combine to produce a per capita gross domestic product of US\$500. Some 80% of its seven million population live in abject poverty having a purchasing power parity of just US\$1,700; unemployment and underemployment continue to be widespread with more than two-thirds of the labour force without formal jobs. Haiti's international debt is about US\$1 billion. The country's GDP has experienced negative growth since international donors suspended almost all aid following the May 2000 legislative elections, which were fraught with irregularities that left Haiti without a functioning legislature; President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Prime Minister Yvon Neptune ruled by decree. This chaotic situation triggered the near civil war that erupted early in 2004 when an armed revolt led by rebels with the Revolutionary Artibonite Resistance Front occupied several cities and, together with world pressure, forced President Jean Bertrand Aristide to resign and flee the country on February 29, 2004. Haiti's interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue suggested that municipal, legislative, and presidential elections would take place in 2005.

Agriculture, mainly small-scale subsistence farming, employs almost 70% of the labour force followed by contributions from manufacturing, services, and tourism. Even here, most of Haiti's manufacturing base is foreign-owned and includes electronics assembly, baseball stitching, and the sewing of beaded clothing and accessories. Domestic manufacturing is limited to sugar refining, flour and cement mills, textiles, and food processing. Haiti's energy consumption per capita is only one-third that of the world's poorest nations. Other than private generators, the Peligre hydroelectric plant on the Artibonite River is the only local source of commercial energy. This lack of a reliable source of electricity, together with waste disposal problems, limited transportation, a lack of capital and skilled labour, the drug traffic, political turmoil and violence, and government policies, have thwarted further industrialisation in Haiti.

Mining has never been an important industry and is restricted to the production of cement and feedstocks such as clays and limestone. Other mining activity includes the quarrying of some marble (100 m³/y), the production of marine salt, and dredging for sand (250,000 m³/y) and gravel (750,000 m³/y). The other famous mineral resource is bauxite, but the Reynolds Aluminium facility was closed in 1985.

There has been some mineral exploration activity in the north of Haiti where Montreal-based KWG Resources assessed the Morne Bossa gold prospect. The resource at Grand Bois is estimated at 4.6 Mt averaging 1.9 g/t Au contained within the surface oxidised zone. This is roughly circular and so

may be amenable to open-pit heap-leach mining. However, it seems that the company is now concentrating on diamonds in northern Ontario and Brazil.

There are immense calcium carbonate deposits in the Caribbean and Jamaica dominates this trade, but Haiti as well as Cuba are believed to possess material of excellent quality and are closer to the US, a major consumer. In the north of Haiti, there are small undeveloped deposits of chromite, copper, gold, iron, ore, lead, manganese, silver, sulphur, tin, and zinc. Auriferous ores have long been noted and some alluvial gold deposits have been worked on a small scale. Base-metal ores occur in the Cretaceous acid volcanic belt stretching across the island and Haiti's Massif du Nord contains porphyry copper deposits of the Pueblo Viejo type famous in the Dominican Republic.