

Overview

Industry snapshot

Hydrocarbon production

Hydrocarbons are found in most New Zealand sedimentary basins formed over the past 100 million years, but it is only since the 1960s that hydrocarbon production has been significant in terms of the country's economy and fuel needs.

Field reserves

Oil and gas is currently produced from 21 petroleum mining licences/permits fields, all in the Taranaki Basin. New Zealand's estimated remaining producing field reserves, as at 1 January 2006, are some 55 million barrels of oil (mmbbls) and 1048 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas (initially 407 mmbbls of oil and 5621 bcf of gas). Non-producing field reserves contain additional estimated reserves of 147 mmbbls of oil and 1144 bcf of gas.

The Taranaki Basin

The Taranaki Basin has always been the main focus for hydrocarbon exploration and production in New Zealand. The first well was drilled in 1865 and petroleum has been continuously produced from the basin since about 1900. The modern era of exploration and production began in 1959 with the discovery of the gas-condensate field at Kapuni on the Taranaki Peninsula. Subsequently, the third offshore well drilled in New Zealand discovered the 'giant' Maui gas-condensate field in 1969. More recently oil discoveries have been made offshore with the Tui and Maari fields along with the Kupe and Pohokura gas discoveries. There have also been a number of smaller discoveries onshore in Taranaki with the Turangi, Rimu and Kauri fields.

Other basins

All other New Zealand basins have been explored to some degree and most of them have an exploration history dating back to the early 1900s. Many of the basins exhibit oil seeps and exploration data reveal many structures with hydrocarbon potential. An onshore gas discovery was made in the East Coast Basin in 1998, while sub-commercial discoveries have also been made in the offshore Canterbury and Great South basins.