

# U - Gas News Report

Unconventional Gas Activities in the World

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by *Constancio Silva*

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## CBM

### PRODUCTION

#### INDIA:

##### India's ONGC to start coal-bed methane production next year

Indian oil and gas exploration and production (E&P) major ONGC will invest an additional \$400-million in two coal-bed methane (CBM) blocks to allow for production to start next year. An official involved in the project said ONGC had decided to increase its capital expenditure on the Bokaro and North Karanpura CBM blocks at the behest of the government, which was keen for the State-owned and managed E&P company to begin production in 2016 to dispel the gloom hovering over the sector.

ONGC planned to drill 80 wells over the next three years but would start with an initial 40 wells to deliver an initial output of 0.5 million metric standard cubic metres a day (mmscmd) of CBM next year. Full output of 1.58 mmscmd would be achieved within the next three years, the official noted.

ONGC held an 80% stake in the North Karanpura block, with Coal India Limited (CIL) holding the balance; however, ONGC had sought government approval to disinvest its 80% stake in the block in favour of a third partner, with the latter expected to bring in technology and best practices that would enhance production efficiencies.

According to the official, achieving higher efficiency parameters than envisaged in the original development plan would hold the key to the financial viability of the project against the backdrop of falling oil and gas prices and an unfavourable exchange rate of the rupee against the dollar.

The start of CBM production by ONGC would be significant in light of, as reported by Mining Weekly Online, the India government's concern over a spate of CBM blocks being relinquished by developers following a slump in gas prices and the absence of a pricing regime specific to CBM.

As many as 17 of the 33 CBM blocks awarded by government had been relinquished by developers. Even ONGC, which had bagged the Jahria block, was considering relinquishing that block on the grounds that the topography and urban development in the region would not permit optimal development of the block. (October 28, 2015)

10/28/2015

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## SHALE GAS

### EXPLORATION

#### **AUSTRALIA:**

##### **Shale gas struck at Australia's Beetaloo Basin**

The UK's Falcon Oil & Gas announced plans Thursday to accelerate its horizontal drilling programme after encouraging results from its second exploratory well in Australia's Beetaloo Basin.

A gross interval of more than 500 metres of shale gas was discovered with the Amungee NW-1 well, with net pay pegged at 150 metres. Falcon reports that data from this well and the previously drilled Kalala S-1 well included 36 metres of full-diameter core, 50 sidewall cores and wireline log data.

**The success of the two Beetaloo wells has prompted the joint venture to move ahead with plans to drill a horizontal well in November 2015 instead of the end of 2016, as originally planned. The new well will target the 45-metre thick "B shale" of the Middle Velkerri formation.**

According to Falcon, the Beetaloo Basin holds an estimated 2.7 billion barrels of oil and **2.11 tcm (74.5 tcf) of gas**. Australia's Origin Energy operates the EP 98 licence, in which the wells were drilled, with a 35-percent stake. South Africa's Sasol also holds a 35% stake, and Falcon owns the remaining 30%. (October 22, 2015)

*10/23/2015*

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## PRODUCTION

### ARGENTINA:

#### Argentina's YPF targets unconventional gas, petrochemicals for growth

Argentina's state-run energy company YPF plans to ramp up unconventional natural gas production to help close the nation's supply deficit and expand petrochemical output.

**"Fifteen percent of our gas production comes from tight and shale,"** CEO Miguel Galuccio said late Thursday at the Argentina Oil & Gas Expo in Buenos Aires. **"We have a goal of getting 50% of our gas production from these formations by 2020."**

YPF is producing gas from tight plays like Lajas and Mulichinco, as well as from Vaca Muerta, one of the world's most promising shale plays that has attracted the attention of majors like Chevron, ExxonMobil and Shell.

At El Orejano, a block it is developing in partnership with Dow Chemical, horizontal wells are "showing better-than-expected results," Galuccio said.

Argentina has 802 Tcf of shale gas resources, far more than its 12 Tcf of proved conventional reserves, according to the US Energy Information Administration. There is room to meet domestic demand, given that the country is running a deficit in gas, which meets 50% of national energy demand.

**Gas production has dropped by about 20% to 118 million cu m/d over the past decade,** led by maturing output from conventional reserves. This has left slack capacity on pipelines that can be filled without much infrastructure investment.

Galuccio said another incentive is that the government is subsidizing gas prices from new developments to encourage exploration and production. **Producers get \$7.50/MMBtu at the wellhead for such new output, more than a \$4/MMBtu average for conventional production.**

As the country pays about \$7.50/MMBtu or more for imported gas in its liquefied form, there is an incentive to close the deficit with local production, he said, more so if global gas prices rise in the future.

### PETROCHEMICAL PLANS

With more gas supplies, YPF wants to expand its petrochemical production.

"There is an important opportunity to create a regional hub for petrochemical production in Argentina," led by polyethylene, polypropylene and other polyolefins and derivatives, Galuccio said.

"This will make it possible to replace imports and become a net exporter of petrochemicals," he said. In August, YPF announced plans to buy stakes in two polymer producers in Argentina for \$122 million by the end of 2015. The assets include an 180,000 mt/year polypropylene plant and another with 130,000 mt/year of capacity.

Galuccio said the petrochemical output will add between \$1/MMBtu and \$2/MMBtu to the revenue the company makes on its gas production. With this additional revenue, YPF could widen its exploration and production to riskier locations that it can't develop now because gas prices are not high enough, he said. YPF produces 45 million cu m/d of gas, more than a third of national output. (October 12, 2015)

## OMAN:

### BP plans to bring shale gas expertise to Oman

Bob Dudley said that in Oman, BP is focusing on introducing technology developed in the United States for shale fields and deploying it in the Middle East to produce gas from some of the world's oldest and toughest sandstone — rocks that are as hard as granite at depths of over 5,000 metres.

Bob Dudley, BP Group chief executive, who was speaking at the opening ceremony of the Kuwait Oil and Gas Show of 2015 on Monday, also shared BP's vision for the oil and gas industry in Kuwait and the Middle East.

Strong partnerships between international and national oil companies are the key to future success in helping to meet people's growing energy needs for decades to come, said Bob Dudley, BP Group chief executive on Monday. (October 12, 2015)

10/13/2015

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## CHINA:

### China Takes Baby Steps Towards Tapping Shale

When last we checked, China wasn't making much headway in developing its shale. Though it sits on the world's largest shale gas reserves, it has so far struggled to replicate America's extraordinary success in the nascent industry. But as the EIA reports, there are now some encouraging signs for Beijing:

*As Chinese companies gain experience producing from shale, the cost of shale gas drilling has declined. By mid-2015, the cost of drilling a horizontal well in shale formations in the Sichuan Basin was between \$11.3 million and \$12.9 million per well, according to China National Petroleum Corporation's Economics and Technology Research Institute. This range was a 23% reduction in the cost of a shale gas well compared with the level in 2013 reports from Sinopec, one of China's national oil companies. [...]*

*Decreasing well costs and increasing experience in developing shale gas have been supplemented with continued government investment in the development of shale gas. In 2012, to encourage the exploration of shale gas, the Chinese government established a four-year, \$1.80 per million British thermal units subsidies program for any Chinese company reaching commercial production of shale gas. In mid-2015, these subsidies were extended to 2020, but at a lower rate.*

The EIA also points to Chinese investments in American shale plays as a valuable way for Beijing to develop its own industry. But while these are steps that will help China catch up to the shale bandwagon, it still has a long way to go. Water scarcity, the remote location of plays (and the lack of necessary infrastructure that goes along with that), and a still relatively inexperienced group of companies all stand in the way of an Asian shale boom.

Capital for the remote, intensive projects is drying up, too, as companies around the world reevaluate their operations in the wake of low global oil and natural gas prices. In China, those investments may be especially hard to come by as the country's economy sputters. In fact, earlier this year China's state-owned oil firm CNOOC called it quits on a high-profile shale project, saying it wasn't "suitable for development on a large scale."

And finally, China's geology is less cooperative than America's, the former being more "crunched" by tectonic forces while the latter is more evenly latticed, making it easier to drill horizontally into shale formations. China may be making headway in its attempt to tap its more than 1,100 trillion cubic feet of shale gas—and it has every energy security and air quality reason to do so—but it has a long road ahead before it enjoys any kind of success on the scale we've seen here in the U.S. these past few years. (September 30, 2015)

10/01/2015

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**CHINA:**

**China's shale gas output soared rapidly over past three years**

Figures show China's proved shale gas reserve have reached some 500 billion cubic meters.

So far, **shale gas productivity exceeds 6 billion cubic meters** in the four major producing areas, including Fuling, Changning, Weiyuan and Yanchang.

Researcher with the China Geological Survey Ren Shoumai says that shale gas output has soared rapidly over the past three years.

"China's shale gas output was 25 million cubic meters in 2012 and that soared almost six-fold in 2014 to reach 1.3 billion cubic meters. Beginning from 2015, shale gas exploration in China has sped up and the output is expected to top 5 billion cubic meters this year, meaning China will become the third country in the world for shale gas commercial development after the US and Canada."

Currently, the exploration area of shale gas in China covers 170-thousand square kilometers, mainly in the Sichuan Basin and its surrounding areas.

In the meantime, the country had finished the drilling of some 840 shale gas wells at the end of this May. (October 28, 2015)

*10/28/2015*

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**UNITED STATES:**

**Rice Energy announces Utica Shale Midstream joint venture in Ohio**

Rice Energy Inc. has announced that its wholly owned subsidiary, Rice Midstream Holdings LLC, has signed a letter of intent with Gulfport Energy Corporation to form a midstream joint venture to develop natural gas gathering and water services assets to support Gulfport's dry gas Utica Shale development in eastern Belmont County and Monroe County, Ohio. The joint venture will be supported by long-term, fee-based service agreements with Gulfport.

Rice will own 75% of the joint venture and be responsible for constructing and operating the JV's assets:

A dry gas gathering system with capacity to gather over 1.8 million Dth/d of natural gas consisting of approximately 165 miles of high and low pressure 12 in. – 30 in. gathering pipelines with multiple interconnections to interstate pipelines including: Rockies Express, ET Rover, TETCO and Dominion East Ohio.

Approximately 50 000 horsepower of compression for gathering and delivery into various downstream interstate pipelines.

A fresh water distribution system designed to deliver fresh water to pads for completion activities.

Under the terms of the Agreement, Gulfport will own the remaining 25% of the joint venture and dedicate approximately 77 000 leasehold acres, including the acreage recently acquired in its Paloma Partners III, LLC and American Energy – Utica, LLC transactions. In addition, Gulfport will also contribute to the joint venture an existing 11-mile gas gathering pipeline and a 350 million Dth/d TETCO interconnect, which are both located in Monroe County.

The joint venture significantly increases Rice's leading midstream position in the core of the Utica Shale. By leveraging its existing footprint, Rice is able to grow its third-party business and expand its relationship with Gulfport across Gulfport's premier position in the prolific dry gas Utica Shale. Rice and Gulfport plan to pursue third-party gas gathering services opportunities within a 340 000-acre area of mutual interest that will cover portions of eastern Belmont County and Monroe County, Ohio.

Commenting on the announcement, Daniel J. Rice IV, Chief Executive Officer, said, "We are excited about furthering our midstream relationship with Gulfport across their position in the core of the Ohio Utica Shale. This joint venture will be one of the premier midstream systems in the prolific dry gas core of the Utica and adds to Rice's attractive inventory of potential drop down candidates to Rice Midstream Partners." (October 8, 2015)

*10/09/2015*

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**UKRAINE:**

**Shell quits shale gas project in eastern Ukraine**

*The Dutch-British oil company Shell, which had earlier started the process of development of deposits of unconventional hydrocarbons in Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, finally left this project, Ukrainian Energy Minister Volodymyr Demchyshyn said at a briefing on Tuesday.*

"Shell came out of this project," he said.

At the same time, he said that the project of development of deposits of unconventional hydrocarbons in the Yuzivska area, which was carried out by the Nadra Yuzivska company, was not closed up, and Ukraine would look for a new investor.

READ ALSO Ukraine to get Shell's calculations on shale gas production in east of country

"If Nadra Yuzivska does not find an investor until the end of the year, I think the company will be liquidated," Demchyshyn said. (October 28, 2015)

*10/28/2015*

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## RESERVES

### CHINA:

#### Chain unveils four shale gas fields

China on Tuesday unveiled four more shale gas with commercial potential, reported a TV channel Wednesday.

"The abundance of shale gas reserves in China is encouraging. There's one field, which is only 3,800 square meters in scale, but has 3,800 cubic meters of shale gas. That's a treasure," Zhai Gangyi, oil & gas director of China Geological Survey (CGS) told CCTV without giving further details.

Earlier this month CGS said **China's proven reserves of shale gas have exceeded 500 bcm**. CGS data shows China has issued 54 licences for shale gas exploration, covering 170 thousand square meters of fields, CCTV said Thursday.

"The production of shale gas in China in 2014 was six times the amount in 2012, hitting 130 million cubic meters. **This year, the production is set to be over 5 bcm**. That means China will become the world's third largest shale gas producer," CCTV quoted Ren Shoumai, researcher of China Geological Survey as saying.

Chinese government has been instrumental in aiding the shale gas industry. In a report published in September, US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said that as Chinese companies gain experience producing from shale, the cost of shale gas drilling has declined. By mid-2015, the cost of drilling a horizontal well in shale formations in the Sichuan Basin was between \$11.3 million and \$12.9 million per well, EIA said citing China National Petroleum Corporation's Economics and Technology Research Institute.

However, certain policy issues such as price controls amid slowing demand for energy are posing challenge for the sector.

More market oriented shale gas production would help China ease carbon emissions and pollution, and would also spark broader resource industry reforms for a more sustainable economic growth, CCTV said. (October 28, 2015)

10/30/2015

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**CHINA:**

**China has proven shale gas reserves of more than 500 Bcm**

**China's proven reserves of shale gas have exceeded 500 billion cubic meters**, according to a China Geological Survey official.

The Zhai Gangyi, a senior expert with CGS, added that Fuling gas field, developed by Sinopec Corp., has little over 38 bcm of proven shale gas reserves, Xinhua Finance Agency reported Thursday.

**Sinopec is aiming to build 5 bcm and 10 bcm of shale gas production capacity in Fuling area by the end of 2015 and 2017**, respectively. Last year, Sinopec's Fuling field was verified by Chinese government as country's largest shale gas play.

**There are four main shale gas production areas in China: Fuling, Changning, Weiyuan and Yanchang. Currently, their combined output capacity tops 6 bcm per year**, according to Zhai.

Chinese government has been instrumental in aiding the shale gas industry. In a report published in September, US Energy Information Administration said that as Chinese **companies gain experience producing from shale, the cost of shale gas drilling has declined. By mid-2015, the cost of drilling a horizontal well in shale formations in the Sichuan Basin was between \$11.3 million and \$12.9 million per well**, EIA said citing China National Petroleum Corporation's Economics and Technology Research Institute. (October 23, 2015)

10/26/2015

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**CHINA:**

**China triples proven reserves at top shale gas project**

**China has nearly tripled the size of proven reserves at its Fuling project, by far the country's largest shale gas find, according to an official from investor Sinopec Corp and an industry report.**

**The Jiaoshiba block of the project, in the municipality of Chongqing in southwest China, has 273.8 bcm of newly proven reserves, said the report carried on news.cnpc.com.cn, an industry portal run by top energy group CNPC.**

**That would take total proven preserve certified by the Ministry of Land and Resources at Fuling to 380.6 bcm, giving it the potential to have an annual production capacity of 10 bcm by the end of 2017, it said.**

China hopes to replicate the shale gas boom that has turned the United States into a net exporter, but more complex geology and small scale of development by only a handful state energy firms have resulted in only a few commercial discoveries.

The latest reserve appraisal was conducted on the Jiaoye-4 and Jiaoye-5 wells, southwest of the previously evaluated Jiaoye-1 and Jiaoye-3 wells.

By the end of August, a total of 142 wells at the Jiaoshiba block had tested high-yield industrial gas flows, the report said.

A media official with Sinopec Corp, the investor in Fuling, confirmed the contents of the report.

Sinopec told Reuters last month that the company was sticking by its investment pledge on shale gas despite it being more costly and technically more challenging than its conventional fields such as Puguang. (October 8, 2015)

10/08/2015

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## SUPPLIES - IMPORTS - EXPORTS

### UNITED STATES:

#### First US shale gas exports will hit oversupplied market

When Cheniere Energy opened a new liquefied natural gas import terminal in Louisiana in 2008, a U.S. shale drilling boom quickly made it obsolete. Seven years on, with the Houston-based firm about to open a landmark export plant on the same site, the timing, again, is far from ideal.

A Reuters analysis shows that a slump in oil prices and global abundance of LNG threaten to undercut the economics of U.S. gas exports, crimp shippers' profits and possibly reduce demand for facilities such as Cheniere's \$12 billion Sabine Pass plant, the first to send U.S. shale gas worldwide.

New supply across the globe, faltering demand and a steep drop in oil-linked LNG prices will make short-term, or spot, deliveries of U.S. gas to markets in Europe and Asia unprofitable next year, according to the Reuters calculations.

The calculations, corroborated by analysts, raise questions about the profitability of short-term shipments not just from Sabine Pass but from the four other U.S. export plants under construction and expected to come online in the next four years.

Four other U.S. projects have already broken ground, including Dominion Resources' Cove Point plant in Maryland expected in 2017, Sempra Energy's Cameron LNG in Louisiana and Freeport LNG's plant in Texas expected in 2018, and Cheniere's Corpus Christi plant in Texas in 2019.

Two plants have construction approval in Canada but are yet to break ground. More than a dozen other North American projects are awaiting approvals, though analysts wonder how many will be ever built, given the market conditions.

"U.S. LNG will materialize at a time when the biggest market (Japan) is witnessing a demand reduction and when supply is growing again massively thanks to Australia," said Thierry Bros, senior gas analyst at Societe Generale. "This is the worst possible timing for this new LNG that has no dedicated market."

Experts do not expect Cheniere's pioneer export plant to sit idle as its import facility did. BG Group, one of the biggest suppliers of LNG in the world and the main shipper for the plant's first phase, will be able to profit by shipping U.S. gas under existing long-term contracts with Asian buyers that offer higher prices than the short-term rates. A rise in oil prices or an export outage in Qatar or Australia could also quickly lead to a price rebound.

Responding to Reuters' analysis, BG Group said LNG from Sabine Pass would feed into its global portfolio, ensuring safe and reliable supplies while "optimizing" returns.

Cheniere's bottom line is protected by a \$400 million annual fee which BG Group will pay the plant operator to ship 3.5 million tonnes per year, an amount BG pays whether or not the gas is shipped. Cheniere did not respond to requests for comment.

Of the owners of the other plants under construction, only Freeport LNG and Dominion responded to requests for comment. Both said that they would not be exposed to commodity price moves because of the annual tolling fees that shippers will pay.

"We hold 20-year liquefaction tolling agreements with our customers and we are not exposed to any market risk upstream or downstream," Freeport spokesman Charlie Rexford said.

## Falling Prices, Falling Margins

Because LNG prices outside the United States are linked to oil, a 50% fall in the value of crude over the past year has slashed the price that LNG exports can fetch.

Based on 2016 oil futures, Asian LNG long-term prices will be around \$7.80 per mmbtu next year, half of last year's levels. LNG spot prices in Europe will be just over \$6. U.S. gas prices were around \$2.30 this week and are expected by analysts to average around \$3 next year.

This week Cheniere chief executive Charif Souki said Europe would need to pay \$8 and Asia \$9 for future LNG projects to be economical.

Assuming an average U.S. gas price of \$3 in 2016, and factoring in the cost of liquefying that gas, shipping it, and paying the \$400 million annual toll, BG could make a profit of \$227 million selling all its LNG from Sabine under long-term contracts to Asia.

But with oversupply in Asia and importers already selling off parts of their long-term supply, it is unlikely that BG will be able to squeeze all the supply from Sabine into long term contracts.

By contrast, selling all of the U.S. supply short term to uncontracted Asian buyers would leave BG with over \$18 million in losses, the calculations show. These short term, or "spot", cargoes now fetch less than the contracted supplies.

LNG shippers tend to strip out their biggest costs when accounting for whether cargo trades will bring profits or losses. Under this method, BG is poised to collect about \$886 million profit from oil-linked sales, \$641 million in Asian spot markets and \$622 million in Europe. But most of those profits are erased when full costs are taken into account, according to the Reuters calculations and industry sources.

"There were already serious questions about how much North American LNG would be commercially viable prior to the collapse in oil prices," said Katherine Spector at CIBC in New York. "Now cheap crude is just one more headwind."

The other option is to send cargoes to nearer European markets. BG has import capacity at the Dragon terminal in Wales, where it could unload cargoes, or sell to other import terminals in north-west Europe.

Still, sending all the gas to European spot markets would result in a loss of over \$32 million, according to the calculations. Moreover, sending large amounts of gas to Europe could trigger a downward spiral for gas prices there, effectively shutting down the region to U.S exports.

"BG won't be making money overall on U.S. exports right now," said one oil major source with knowledge of LNG shipping costs. "But by exporting they'll be losing less than they would if they stopped exports altogether." (October 29, 2015)

10/30/2015

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## PUBLICATIONS

### **UNITED KINGDOM:**

#### **53% of locals back fracking**

A pro fracking group has hailed a new survey which highlights the benefits of a shale gas industry in Lancashire – but opponents say they are just cherry-picking.

The EU polled 6,000 people in various regions where fracking is planned to test attitudes to the controversial industry.

Supporters say fracking will provide energy, jobs and boost the economy, opponents say it is a threat to the environment, health and homes.

Two bids to frack at Little Plumpton and Roseacre Wood were rejected by Lancashire County Council this year but energy company Cuadrilla have appealed to the Planning Inspectorate.

The North West Energy Task Force which is supported by Cuadrilla and Centrica said the survey showed a majority (53 per cent) of Lancastrians believes that shale gas “brings new opportunities for me or my region”, the second highest of the regions polled after Poland.

But opponents said the NWETF ignored less favourable findings of the survey.

Barbara Richardson from the Roseacre Awareness Group said: “It is still our experience, in the areas where fracking is being proposed, where people and businesses are fully informed about the potential impacts, that the majority of people are actually opposed. This is borne also borne out by DECC’s own recent surveys into public opinion and which prove the numbers who oppose fracking are growing.”

Bob Dennett from Frack Free Lancashire said: “This report has been contradicted by the DECC Taracker report which was done after it.

“But both reports show that the more people are informed about fracking the more they are opposed to it.” (October 2, 2015)

10/02/2015

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