



## A little snippet that may not be as good as it sounds

Posted by [Heading Out](#) on November 7, 2005 - 12:25pm

Topic: [Supply/Production](#)

Tags: [peak oil](#), [saudi arabia](#) [[list all tags](#)]

[Bloomberg](#) has a story this morning reporting on the IEA view of Saudi production. The headline is that Saudi production can be raised 75%, but in the story it carried the comment

Production this year may approach a record 10.7 million barrels a day, including light oils and the kingdom's share of output from the so-called Neutral Zone, a territory between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the IEA said. It will probably climb to 11.9 million a day in 2010.

Which is interesting beyond the point that this is 600,000 bd less than the original production objective, which was 12.5 mbd. In an earlier post I had noted that the list of oil fields that would be tapped for the increase had grown by one from the original list, suggesting some possible snags in the original fields. I note that in the new evaluation Ghawar is being expected to carry an even larger volume of production.

One of those is Ghawar, the world's largest deposit. More than 80 percent of all the oil produced from Saudi Arabia over time has come from Ghawar and other two fields, Abqaiq and Safaniyah, according to the IEA.

Output from Ghawar, which started production in 1951, can still increase because ``Saudi Aramco has managed its oilfields very conservatively over several decades in order to extend their plateau production for as long as possible," an attempt to ``maximize long-term recovery factors," the IEA says.

Ghawar is currently producing 5.8 million barrels a day and that may climb to more than 6 million a day in 2010, the IEA says. Output would then peak by about the middle of the next decade, declining to about 3.7 million a day in 2030.

The increasingly heavy reliance on Ghawar is, of course, one of the things that worries Matt Simmons. When the fields at Abu Saf'ah and Qatif were initially discussed they were set aside for offsets of the declining production in some of the older fields. The production target was 800,000 bd. which was the 2004 IEA estimate of [Saudi depletion](#). But production at those two fields has apparently not only not reached the target figure (it is still in the 600,000 to 650,000 range apparently depending on who you read) but it is now being counted as increased production, rather than offsetting declines. The make-up of old field production is to be achieved by getting more from the old fields. And hence, I suppose, the increase in projected numbers for Ghawar.

Well I suppose it also depends on which part of Ghawar they are talking about, since under the

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overall definition the Haradh III development which should be adding 300,000 bd, can be considered as part of that field, though it is generally now discussed as a separate development. And to get this production they will, as we have discussed, need to have an increasing number of oil rigs to drill the wells. No, somehow the details of the story don't quite carry the hope that the headline did.



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