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Algeria: 50 years on but little to celebrate

October marked the 50th anniversary of Algeria's first gas exports – and the first-ever commercial LNG exports. But any inclination in Algeria towards celebration of this anniversary is likely to have been dampened by the bad news which continues to emerge from the country's gas sector. Production has been falling for some years, and new fields need to be brought online to stem the decline. But Algeria's efforts to attract new foreign investment have been lamentable failures. Hopes were pinned on a new licensing round to provide a much-needed boost to exploration, but the results of this round, announced at the end of September, were bitterly disappointing. Of 31 blocks on offer, only five bids were received and only four awards made. And on top of this, Total has dropped its plans to develop the Ahnet gas field, which is a key element of a plan to open up a new gas-producing region to the southwest of the super-giant, but ageing, Hassi R'Mel field, whose own declining output is the root cause of Algeria's gas production problems. Gas Matters reviews the worsening Algerian gas crisis and the prospects for a reversal of the depressing downward trend in production.



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