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Exploration of the Niger Delta

Data have been assimilated for the area starting with the work of Shell in 1952. The Cenozoic onshore delta activity began in 1958 and the offshore-shelf exploration began in 1963 followed 32 years later by the deep-water activity in 1995. In total 1182 exploration wells have been drilled with 1108 of them being on the delta. For the entire period, 51% of the exploration wells can be termed successful (570 discoveries for 1108 exploration wells). In the early years 52% of the exploration wells were successful and in the latter years the success rate increased to 68%. However, during a period of 1966-76 only 40% of the wells were considered successful. The increased success during the later years is attributed to improved seismic technology. The sizes of the fields have decreased over the period. About 41,000 MMBO IRR (Initial Recoverable Reserves) were proven by 570 discoveries and 32,000 MMBO IRR have been put on stream in 240 fields. Analysis of the discoveries shows that 3% of the discoveries are giants and represent 32% of the total reserves found. In retrospect, 40% of the discoveries represent smaller fields with only 3% of the total reserves found to date. Of the 18 giants (=or > 500 million BO), 4 have been discovered in the last decade and 3 of them are in deep water.