

# Belarus extracts its own oil – Belarus photo digest

Many in Belarus took the recent discovery of new oil fields in the country as a joke: president Alexander Lukashenka had demanded earlier that the government start searching for its own black gold. According to experts, however, these deposits were already known.

It was only the complexity of extraction that had prevented the mining of these deposits before. However, officials now claim that Belarusian oil costs five times less than Russian oil, and extraction will be profitable even with world oil prices at \$20 per barrel.

Belarus extracts around 1.6m tonnes of oil on its territory annually. This is a tiny amount compared to world oil production leaders. Russia, for example, produces roughly the same amount daily. The capacities of Belarusian refineries, meanwhile, require an additional 24m tonnes per year, which the country traditionally buys from Russia.

Processing Russian oil and the export of oil products has guaranteed economic stability for Lukashenka for almost two decades. Oil production exports make up around one third of Belarus's exports, which makes the country vulnerable to global market fluctuations.

However, the Putin era brought [regular oil and gas tensions](#), which forced Belarus to seek alternative supplies. Belarus even resorted to importing oil from Azerbaijan and Venezuela in 2010-2011 and 2016, as well as re-examining its own reserves.



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*About the photographer: Siarhei Leskiec is a freelance photographer whose work focuses on everyday life, folk traditions, and rituals in the Belarusian countryside. Originally from Maladzeczna Region, he received a history degree from the Belarusian State Pedagogical University.*