



# Importance of geothermal energy and its environmental effects in Turkey

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 27 July 2007

Accepted 16 November 2008

Available online 21 January 2009

### Keywords:

Geothermal energy

Environment

Renewables

Electricity production

## ABSTRACT

Geothermal energy, a relatively benign energy source when compared with other energy sources due to reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, is used for electricity generation and direct utilization. Turkey has a place among the first seven countries in the world in the abundance of geothermal resources, but it has only used about 4% of its potential. The paper presents the status of energy needs and renewables, potential, utilization and the importance of geothermal energy in Turkey. It also gives a comparison between geothermal energy and other energy sources regarding environmental issues. It is estimated that if the geothermal heating potential alone in Turkey is used, 5 million residences will be heated and as a result, releases of 48 million ton/year CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into the atmosphere will be prevented. In addition to this, if the other geothermal potential (i.e. electricity) is used it will provide considerable environmental benefits. Therefore, it is expected that geothermal energy development will significantly speed up in the future.

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## 1. Introduction

The majority of energy produced in the world today is obtained from fossil fuels, i.e. coal, petroleum, natural gas, and nuclear energy. In addition, sustainable and environmentally friendly resources, such as hydroelectric and geothermal, sunlight, wind, biogas, and wood, are also utilized [1].

With increasing awareness of the detrimental effects of the burning of fossil fuels on the environment, there has been an increasing interest worldwide in using clean and renewable energy sources, such as geothermal energy [2]. Geothermal energy, one of the most promising among renewable energy sources, has proven to be reliable, clean and safe, and therefore, its use for power production, and heating and cooling is increasing. It is a power source that produces electricity with minimal environmental impact [3–5]. Geothermal energy, hydropower, solar energy, wind power and biomass energy are the major renewable energy resources for Turkey in the future. Provided that geothermal energy, which has a considerable potential in Turkey, is used in electricity generation, besides heating and greenhouses, the energy problem in Turkey will be remarkably solved [6]. Turkey has a place among the first seven countries in terms of the abundance of geothermal resources around the world [7]. The estimated total geothermal potential in Turkey is about 31,500 MW<sub>t</sub> for direct use

and 4500 MW<sub>e</sub> for power generation. However, only 4% of this potential has been utilized so far [8].

The paper presents the status of energy needs and renewables, potential, utilization and the importance of geothermal energy in Turkey. It also gives a comparison between geothermal energy and other energy sources regarding environmental issues.

## 2. Turkey's energy needs and renewables

Turkey has almost all kinds of energy resources, but it is an energy importing country; more than half of the energy requirement has been supplied by imports. The high level of dependence on imported petroleum and natural gas is the dominant factor in Turkey's pattern of energy consumption. Turkey's primary energy sources include hydropower, geothermal, lignite, hard coal, oil, natural gas, wood, animal and plant waste, solar and wind energy [9,10]. Table 1 shows Turkey's primary energy production and consumption in 2005 and 2006. In 2006, the primary energy production and consumption reached 26.763 million tons of oil equivalent (Mtoe) and 98.138 Mtoe, respectively. Fossil fuels provided about 89.3% of the total energy consumption in 2006, with oil (33.2%) in the first place, followed by natural gas (29.4%) and coal (26.7%). While the share of petroleum in the consumption of commercial primary energy increased 1.12% from 2005 to 2006, the share of natural gas in the consumption of commercial primary energy grew 16.75% from 2005 to 2006. Turkey hasn't utilized nuclear energy yet [11]. The Turkish coal sector, which includes hard coal as well as lignite, accounts for nearly one half of the country's total primary energy production, with lignite being the

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**Table 1**  
Turkey's primary energy production and consumption [12].

Energy source	Production		Consumption		Increase (2005–2006) in consumption Percentage
	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2005	Year 2006	
	Fossil fuels (Mtoe)	14.425	16.211	79.075	87.586
Oil	2.395	2.284	32.192	32.551	+1.12
Natural gas	0.816	0.839	24.726	28.867	+16.75
Coal (hard coal and lignite)	11.214	13.088	22.157	26.168	+18.10
Nuclear	–	–	–	–	–
Renewables (Mtoe)	10.124	10.552	10.124	10.552	+4.23
Hydro	3.483	3.886	3.483	3.886	+11.57
Geothermal	0.926	1.081	0.926	1.081	+16.74
Solar	0.385	0.403	0.385	0.403	+4.68
Wind	0.005	0.011	0.005	0.011	+120
Combustible renewables and wastes	5.325	5.171	5.325	5.171	–2.89
Total (Mtoe)	24.549	26.763	89.199	98.138	+10.0

main domestic energy source at 11.545 Mtoe in 2006. The renewables collectively provided 10.7% of the primary energy consumption, mostly in the form of combustible renewables and wastes (5.3%), hydropower (about 4.0%), geothermal (1.1%), and a small amount of other renewable energy resources (approximately 0.3%) [12].

In Turkey, electricity is produced by thermal power plants consuming coal, lignite, natural gas, fuel oil, and geothermal energy and hydropower plants. Turkey's electricity production was about 176,300 GWh in 2006, compared to 2814 GWh in 1960 (Table 2). Most of the electricity was produced by natural gas (about 45.8%), followed by hard coal and lignite (26.4%), renewables (25.4%), and oil (2.4%) in 2006 [13].

Turkey has substantial renewable energy resources. Renewables especially hydropower make the second-largest contribution to domestic energy production after coal. The installed capacity and the electricity production between 1960 and 2006 for some new and renewable energy sources, such as hydropower, combustible renewables and waste, geothermal, and wind energy are given in Table 3, where the data were compiled from statistical reports of the Turkish Electricity Transmission Company (TEİAŞ). The total electricity production from renewables in 2006 was 44,618.5 GWh. By far the largest contribution (about 99.15%) came from hydropower, but 0.35% came from combustible renewables and waste, and 0.5% from geothermal and wind. A study hasn't been carried out on the electricity production from other new renewables such as solar energy, wave and tidal energy. It was apparent that, in 2006, wind and geothermal energy were in the leading position

**Table 2**  
Turkey's production of electricity by source [13].

Energy source	Years							
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004	2005	2006
Fossil fuels (GWh)	1773	5425	11,792	34,315	93,714	104,360	122,120	131,682
Hard coal + imported coal	1008	1382	912	621	3819	11,998	13,246	14,217
Lignite	533	1442	5049	19,561	34,367	22,450	29,946	32,433
Fuel oil	233	2600	5831	3942	9311	7670	5483	4341
Natural gas	–	–	–	10,192	46,217	62,242	73,445	80,691
Nuclear	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Renewables (GWh)	1042	3199	11,484	23,228	31,208	46,339	39,837	44,618
Total production (GWh)	2815	8623	23,275	57,543	124,922	150,698	161,956	176,300
Net consumption (GWh)		7308	20,398	46,820	98,296	121,142	130,263	143,071

among renewables except for hydropower with regard to the total installed capacity (81.9 MW<sub>e</sub>).

In Turkey, the primary energy sources and their consumptions between 2005 and 2025 are illustrated in Fig. 1. Primary energy consumption is expected to increase from 119 Mtoe (million tons of oil equivalents) in 2005 to 229 Mtoe by 2015 and to 535 Mtoe by 2025 [14]. According to 2004 data, Turkey produced 24.33 Mtoe/year from its own primary sources and consumed 86.20 Mtoe/year of primary energy. It is expected that by the year 2020, primary energy production will be 65.65 Mtoe, while primary energy consumption will be 309.5 Mtoe.

As can be seen in Fig. 1, it is expected that the energy resource having the most important rate in 2025 will be coal, with approximately 56%. The renewable energy source, the largest amount in 2025, will be hydropower energy (1.95%), while geothermal energy will have 1.01% of Turkey's primary energy consumption.

### 3. Geothermal energy potential and its usage in Turkey

Turkey is located on the Alpine–Himalayan orogenic belt and the Miocene or younger grabens are developed as the result of this orogeny. Turkey is surrounded by seas on three sides: the Black Sea to the north, the Marmara Sea and Aegean Sea to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Preliminary data show that the Marmara and Aegean regions of Turkey are rich in geothermal energy, which can be used for electricity production. Turkey is a country with significant potential in geothermal energy. Resource assessments have been made many times by the General Directorate of Mineral Research and Exploitation (MTA). Turkey has a place among the world's first seven countries with respect to the abundance of its geothermal resources [6,15,16].

Widespread volcanism, fumarole hydrothermal alterations, and the existence of more than 1000 hot and mineral water springs up to 100 and 140 °C in geothermal fields with a temperature range of 40–232 °C have been discovered in Turkey [17].

In spite of geothermal energy being a relatively new energy source for Turkey, when compared with other energy sources, it is utilized for various purposes, such as for electricity production, space heating and touristic installations. About 87.5% of the total geothermal potential is appropriate for thermal use (temperature <200 °C) and the remainder for electricity production (temperature >200 °C) [18]. A recent estimate of the geothermal potential of Turkey gives the total potential resources for direct use in excess of 31,500 MW<sub>t</sub>. These figures for the potential cover both known and unknown resources (theoretical potential). It is estimated that the identified geothermal resources will be 200 MW<sub>e</sub> for electricity generation (resource temperature higher than 200 °C) and in excess of 3293 MW<sub>t</sub> for direct use (resource temperature lower than 200 °C) [19].

Geothermal energy in Turkey can be utilized in various forms, such as electricity generation, direct use, space heating, heat pumps, greenhouse heating and industrial usage. Currently in Turkey, hydropower and biomass are mostly in use, and geothermal is in the third place. Geothermal electricity generation has a minor role in Turkey's electricity capacity, as low as 0.10%, but the projections foresee an improvement to 0.32% by the year 2020. Opposing electricity generation, geothermal heat capacity is improving faster.

In 2005, the geothermal energy use of Turkey amounted to about 119.7 GWh/year of electricity and 6900.5 GWh/year for direct use [20,21]. Figs. 2 and 3 present the 2005 data in pie-chart form in percentages. Most of the development in direct use has been in district heating, which now serves 103,000 residences (827 MW<sub>t</sub> and 7712.7 TJ/year), and in individual space heating (74 MW<sub>t</sub> and 816.8 TJ/year) [22,23]. A total of 800,000 m<sup>2</sup> of greenhouse is heated by geothermal fluids (192 MW<sub>t</sub> and 3633 TJ/year).

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