Bahrain is the smallest oil and gas producer in the Gulf region, though recent oil and gas discoveries may lead to greater energy independence. Bahrain relies on an onshore field it shares with Saudi Arabia. For the majority of its crude oil needs and produces small volumes of crude oil and associated gas from the onshore Bahrain field. The tiny island state consumes all of the natural gas it produces and plans shortly to start importing LNG via a floating receiving terminal to ensure supplies for peak demand for power generation and an expanding industrial sector. Bahrain relies entirely on natural gas to generate electricity, though it is gradually increasing the share of renewables. The power sector consumes roughly half of total gas supply while industry accounts for 33% of total gas demand.

In recent years, Bahrain has made an effort to diversify its energy sources with gas as a key component of its strategy. At present, Bahrain meets its domestic gas demand from indigenous production from the onshore Bahrain field. There is more gas in deeper strata below the Bahrain field that the Ministry of Oil and Gas is looking to develop, possibly with the help of international oil companies. In the interim, Bahrain intends to import LNG to meet demand. In January, it completed construction of a floating LNG import terminal that is intended to provide flexibility and help satisfy unexpected peak demand for gas.

Bahrain’s Sustainable Energy Authority is in overall charge of implementing the country’s renewable energy and energy efficiency program in accordance with the Economic Vision 2030 plan. The National Renewable Energy Action Plan, endorsed by the cabinet in 2017, set a national renewable energy target of 5% by 2021 and 19% by 2025, mainly from solar, wind and waste to energy technologies. Construction on the first utility-scale solar project in Bahrain has begun. The Solar PV park will provide 100 MW of electricity when completed. In addition to deploying renewable energy, Bahrain is determined to reduce domestic energy consumption. The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan covers all sectors of the economy with the aim of achieving an energy efficiency target of 6% by 2025.

Bahrain’s economy has been impacted badly by the COVID-19 pandemic due to a number of internal and external stresses related to lower oil prices and large off-budget spending. Large interest payments on its external debt are a major source of stress. Although Bahrain is not a major producer of oil and gas, it does export refined product, as its sales revenues produce more than is required for the domestic market. It isn’t yet known if cost-cutting measures announced by all the majors in response to the coronavirus pandemic’s impact on energy demand and oil prices will discourage the multinationals from taking on new risk. This may delay development of the newly discovered offshore oil and gas deposits.