

OIL EXTRACTION

Uganda's oil sector is edging closer to first production as CNOOC confirms 15 wells ready at the Kingfisher field. With drilling 95% complete and processing facilities nearly finished, the project is ahead of schedule, awaiting government clearance for oil extraction, writes **Eddie Ssejjoba**

Drilling of oil at the Kingfisher oil field in Kikuube district, western Uganda, is in advanced stages, with experts announcing 15 wells ready for production.

Currently, civil works for the construction of the Central Processing Facility for the Kingfisher and Tilenga projects in Kikuube and Buliisa districts are progressing well.

Drilling has so far covered 95% of the total work at Kingfisher oil field located at the Lake Albert Rift Basin, ahead of schedule for oil production, according to the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) Uganda Limited.

This means over 120 oil wells are ready for production under the Tilenga and Kingfisher projects. The requirement for the first oil was having 100 oil wells ready for production. CNOOC needed 13 wells out of the 31 at Kingfisher oil field to start production.

"The project is running ahead of schedule, we hope we can produce the first oil as soon as possible," Denis Mulondo, a geologist with CNOOC Uganda, said, adding: "The 15 wells are sufficient to enable oil production, but drilling is

MORE OIL WELLS READY FOR PRODUCTION – CNOOC

PHOTO BY EDDIE SSEJJوبا



Mulondo (second-right), a geologist with CNOOC Uganda, addressing journalists on the 15 wells at Kingfisher oil field in Kikuube district

ongoing for the 16th well."

Mulondo said work at the Kingfisher Central Processing Facility (CPF), which has capacity to process 40,000 barrels of oil per day, was at 95%. The CPF is where crude oil will be received from the oil wells, stored, and processed to separate it from water and gas to produce quality crude.

It will then be transported 46km in a feeder pipeline to the export hub and refinery at Kabaale in Hoima district, from where it will be transported by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) for 1,443km to Tanga port in Tanzania.

"For the drilling part, we are ready to start producing oil, we are only waiting for other

players like EACOP and the Government of Uganda to give us a go ahead, most probably by early next year," he explained.

PRESIDENT TO MAKE THE CALL

Mulondo said President Yoweri Museveni will make the final decision as to when the oil production will commence, adding that drillers will also have to wait until then.

In the meantime, Mulondo

said the oil in the completed wells will stay in the ground, which is the cheapest and safest way to store it for now.

He explained that out of the 31 wells located on four well pads, 20 are producers while 11 are well injectors. The oil well injectors, he explained, are used to inject water into the underground oil reservoirs to maintain pressure and drive oil towards production wells for enhanced oil recovery.

Mulondo said the Kingfisher LR800r oil drilling rig, installed in September 2022, has the capacity to dig deep 8km (8,000m), yet the deepest well at Kingfisher is 7,000 metres. He said for all the 13 wells so far built, they had encountered oil.

When asked about the scheduled oil production at a separate function at Kyangwali in Kikuube district, Ernest Rubondo, the executive director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, said the project was moving well and oil production was expected next year.

Rubondo explained that the Kingfisher project is operated by CNOOC on behalf of the Uganda National Oil Company and TotalEnergies, and supervised in line with the preparation of the first oil in 2026. He commended CNOOC for working well with the communities in Kikuube and other districts.

"I would like to thank the communities for this support.

CNOOC READY

Andrew Mbigiti, a senior media officer at CNOOC Uganda, said much as they were ready for oil production, it is the Government that will inform them about the commencement of production.

Mbigiti said the good news was that the drillers had not hit any dry well. He said focus was put on green oilfields development using high technology that brings no direct contact between Lake Albert and the oil production.

He said CNOOC Uganda last week made another milestone when they switched off their diesel generators after getting connected to the national power grid.

"Our goal is to reduce the amount of diesel we use in our operations. We have cut the fuel amount up to 50%," Mbigiti said, adding that the company has been using about 1,400lts of fuel per day.

In addition, the company will be producing liquefied petroleum gas, which will be part of clean and sustainable energy that will be used for cooking and in industries.

The only challenges they have faced are the civil society organisations that have been funded by foreigners, but the communities have identified them and continue to support the project," he said, adding that some civil society organisations were spreading false information among communities about the project.

OIL WELLS

31

THE NUMBER OF WELLS HOSTED AT KINGFISHER OIL FIELD.