

AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT · OFFSHORE

Murphy Oil Confirms Discovery at Ultra-Deepwater Bubale-1X Well Offshore Africa

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U.S. independent Murphy Oil Corporation has announced an oil discovery at the Bubale-1X exploration well, reporting 30 metres of pay in what is described as one of the deepest wells drilled in African offshore history. The announcement was made in Abidjan, signalling that the well is located in the waters off Côte d'Ivoire or the broader West African margin in that vicinity.

The Bubale-1X result represents a meaningful technical milestone. Achieving 30 metres of net pay in an ultra-deepwater environment confirms the presence of a working petroleum system at significant depth, a result that will draw attention from majors and independents alike who are evaluating the prospectivity of the deeper frontier plays along the West African transform margin. Murphy Oil, while relatively modest in scale compared to supermajors, has built a credible track record in deepwater exploration, and this result adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the commercial potential of the region.

For the broader West African deepwater exploration cycle, the Bubale-1X discovery arrives at a time when the industry is cautiously re-engaging with frontier and near-frontier acreage following the investment contraction of the mid-2010s and the COVID-era downturn. A confirmed pay interval at one of the deepest wells on the African continental shelf will likely accelerate appraisal planning and could stimulate renewed licensing interest in adjacent blocks. The Abidjan dateline also places this discovery firmly within the orbit of Côte d'Ivoire's upstream sector, which has been working to attract increased international investment.

Appraisal drilling will be the critical next step to determine the scale and commerciality of the Bubale-1X find. The well's extreme depth will set demanding technical requirements for any future development concept, with subsea tiebacks, high-specification floating production infrastructure, and purpose-designed drilling programmes all likely on the table as Murphy and its partners evaluate their options. The depth parameter alone elevates the technical complexity and capital intensity of any path toward first oil, meaning early-stage service and equipment scoping will be a priority for operators seeking to understand development costs before committing to appraisal.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian service companies should begin monitoring Murphy Oil's appraisal planning closely, as ultra-deepwater discoveries of this nature typically require high-specification subsea systems, deepwater-rated drilling units, and FPSO or semi-submersible production concepts where Norwegian firms hold strong competitive positions. Early engagement with Murphy Oil and its co-venturers in Abidjan — whether through local representation or direct technical dialogue — is advisable before appraisal contracts are scoped. This is a monitor-and-position moment, not yet a bid opportunity.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Subsea/FPSO:** Ultra-deepwater pay at Bubale-1X will demand high-specification subsea production systems and a deepwater-capable floating production unit if commercialised — Norwegian FPSO and subsea integrators should engage early in concept screening.
- **Drilling:** One of the deepest wells on the African shelf implies sixth- or seventh-generation drillship requirements for appraisal; Norwegian drilling contractors and well engineering firms should track Murphy's appraisal timeline.
- **Service:** Deepwater well testing, completion technology, and reservoir characterisation services will be required during appraisal; Norwegian well services players should establish contact with Murphy's technical team now.

- **Pipeline:** Depending on proximity to existing infrastructure, subsea tieback or export pipeline feasibility studies may emerge as an early appraisal workstream — Norwegian pipeline engineers should monitor block geography as more data is released.
- **LNG:** If associated gas volumes prove material, West African deepwater projects increasingly incorporate gas monetisation planning from an early stage; Norwegian LNG and gas processing specialists should flag this discovery for future tracking.

[Original source: Africa Oil+Gas Report →](#)

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