

AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT

São Tomé and Príncipe Opens Three EEZ Blocks to International Bidders

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São Tomé e Príncipe's upstream petroleum regulator, the Agência Nacional do Petróleo de São Tomé e Príncipe (ANP-STP), has issued a formal invitation to eligible companies to bid on three acreages within the country's Exclusive Economic Zone. The licensing round marks a renewed push by the small island nation to attract international upstream investment to its offshore waters in the Gulf of Guinea.

São Tomé e Príncipe sits in one of West Africa's most prospective deepwater basins, adjacent to the prolific Niger Delta petroleum system. The country shares a Joint Development Zone (JDZ) with Nigeria, which has already seen exploration activity, and its national EEZ holds additional frontier potential that has attracted periodic interest from international oil companies. The ANP-STP's decision to put three blocks on the market simultaneously signals ambition to accelerate exploration momentum and diversify its upstream partnership base beyond existing stakeholders.

The island nation's upstream sector has historically struggled to translate geological promise into production, hampered by limited state capacity, small domestic market size, and the capital-intensive nature of deepwater operations. However, rising regional exploration activity — driven by major discoveries in Namibia, along with sustained interest in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon — has revived broader investor appetite for Gulf of Guinea frontier acreage. ANP-STP appears to be positioning this round to capitalise on that renewed regional sentiment.

For incoming operators, the São Tomé EEZ presents a deepwater and ultra-deepwater frontier environment requiring robust subsea infrastructure, modern

drilling assets, and experienced well services capacity. The absence of existing production infrastructure means that any commercial discovery would trigger a full greenfield development cycle — spanning exploration drilling, appraisal, FEED, and ultimately FPSO or tieback solutions — representing a long but potentially significant value chain for international service providers.

Norwegian service companies with Gulf of Guinea track records — particularly those already mobilised in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, or Gabon — are well placed to monitor this licensing round closely. While first mover activity will be driven by E&P operators securing acreage, service company engagement at the pre-FEED and concept-selection stage can establish early competitive positioning. The timeline from licence award to drilling campaign in frontier jurisdictions of this scale typically runs two to four years, making early relationship-building with incoming operators a priority now.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian service companies should monitor which operators secure the three blocks, as any deepwater discovery in São Tomé's EEZ will require subsea, drilling, and FPSO expertise where Norwegian firms hold strong competitive advantages. Early engagement with incoming licensees during concept selection and pre-FEED phases — before formal tender processes open — is the most effective entry strategy in frontier jurisdictions of this type. Companies already active in nearby Nigeria or Equatorial Guinea should assess whether existing mobilisation and local partnerships can be leveraged across to São Tomé.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Subsea:** Deepwater frontier acreage with no existing infrastructure creates potential for full subsea production system scopes from wellhead to export, relevant for Norwegian subsea integrators.
- **FPSO:** A greenfield deepwater discovery in the STP EEZ would almost certainly require a standalone FPSO solution, making early concept-phase engagement with incoming operators commercially important.

- **Drilling:** Exploration and appraisal drilling campaigns will be required once licences are awarded, representing rig and well services opportunities for Norwegian contractors already positioned in the Gulf of Guinea.
- **Well Services:** Frontier deepwater wells in the STP EEZ will demand high-specification well services including cementing, completion, and testing — niches where Norwegian firms carry strong technical credentials.
- **Pipeline:** Depending on proximity to existing Gulf of Guinea infrastructure, infield flowline and gas export pipeline scopes could emerge at development stage, warranting early technical screening.

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