

AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT · UGANDA

Uganda Names 'Pearl Sweet' Crude Blend Ahead of Long-Awaited First Oil

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Uganda has officially named its future crude export blend 'Pearl Sweet,' a branding milestone as the country moves closer to achieving first oil — still several months away, according to President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who made the announcement. The naming of a crude blend is a commercially significant step, signalling that upstream stakeholders are advancing preparations for export logistics and buyer engagement ahead of production commencement.

The unveiling of a marketable crude grade reflects Uganda's ambition to position its landlocked oil resources competitively on international markets. A named blend allows prospective buyers, traders, and refiners to begin quality assessments and commercial negotiations well in advance of first barrels reaching the export terminal. For a country without coastal access, the crude's journey to market depends entirely on the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), the long-debated infrastructure project connecting Uganda's Albertine Graben fields to the Tanzanian port of Tanga.

While the article does not specify current production timelines beyond noting that first oil remains several months away, the Pearl Sweet branding exercise suggests that operational and commercial workstreams are converging. Uganda's upstream development has faced repeated delays over the years, driven by financing challenges, environmental scrutiny of EACOP, and broader project complexity associated with developing landlocked, waxy crude reserves. The fact that a crude name is now being formally presented to the public and markets indicates that project sponsors and the Ugandan government are signalling forward momentum.

For international energy service companies monitoring East Africa, the Pearl Sweet announcement is a useful gauge of project maturity. It suggests that infrastructure readiness, production planning, and offtake arrangements are sufficiently advanced to warrant market-facing communication. Norwegian oil and gas service companies that have been tracking Uganda's development cycle should treat this as a cue to sharpen their near-term engagement strategies, particularly around services that will be required in the run-up to and immediately following first oil.

Uganda's upstream sector has attracted significant attention from global operators, and the pipeline infrastructure connecting the fields to export markets remains one of the most commercially complex and politically watched energy projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Pearl Sweet branding does not resolve the outstanding logistical and financing questions surrounding EACOP, but it reinforces that Uganda's government and industry partners remain committed to bringing the project to fruition. Norwegian service companies should watch the coming months for concrete production start announcements and pipeline commissioning updates, which will drive specific procurement and contracting activity.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian service companies should treat the Pearl Sweet announcement as a signal to review their Uganda and East Africa engagement pipelines, particularly for well services, production operations, and any pipeline-related technical services tied to EACOP progress. Companies positioned in drilling, completions, or upstream operations support should be assessing whether local partnerships or pre-qualification processes are already underway with the operating consortia. The months leading to first oil typically trigger a concentrated wave of service contracting — being late to pre-qualification is a common and costly mistake.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Drilling:** With first oil approaching, well completion and production testing services will enter active procurement — Norwegian drilling contractors should confirm pre-qualification status with the Ugandan upstream operating consortium now.

- **Pipeline:** EACOP remains the critical path to export; Norwegian pipeline integrity, inspection, and commissioning specialists should monitor contracting activity as the infrastructure moves toward operational readiness.
- **Service:** Upstream production chemicals and flow assurance expertise are directly relevant given Uganda's waxy, landlocked crude characteristics — Norwegian well services firms should be positioning technical proposals accordingly.
- **FPSO:** Uganda is landlocked and pipeline-dependent rather than an FPSO market, but Norwegian floating storage and offloading expertise may find indirect application at the Tanga export terminal end of the value chain.
- **Subsea:** Subsea scope is limited in this landlocked development, but Norwegian companies with onshore production facility and instrumentation capabilities may find relevant opportunities as surface infrastructure is commissioned.

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Saga Advisory

General: info@saga-advisory.com · saga-advisory.com

STAVANGER · CAPE TOWN