

GOOGLE NEWS QUERY: NUPRC · NIGERIA · DRILLING

Nigeria approves 128 new drill wells in 2026

Saga deep read · 09 October 2026 · Score 66

Nigeria's upstream regulator, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), has approved 128 new drilling permits and 77 re-entry well approvals for oil operations in 2026, according to the Commission's Chief Executive Officer. The announcement signals a significant uptick in sanctioned well activity across Nigeria's upstream sector and underscores the regulator's push to accelerate production recovery and reserve development under the Petroleum Industry Act framework.

The combined figure of 205 approved well interventions — 128 new drills and 77 re-entries — represents a meaningful volume of near-term rig and well-services demand. Re-entry programmes in particular are an established route for operators to restore or boost output from existing wellbores at lower capital cost than greenfield drilling, and their inclusion alongside new permits suggests a dual-track approach to production growth: incremental gains from existing infrastructure alongside fresh exploration and development drilling.

The NUPRC CEO did not, in the reported statements, specify the breakdown of approvals by basin, water depth, acreage, or individual operator. It is therefore not possible to determine at this stage what proportion of activity falls onshore, in shallow water, or in deepwater, nor which companies hold the relevant licences. Further regulatory disclosures or operator announcements will be needed to map the opportunity set with precision.

For the broader Nigerian upstream sector, the approval volumes carry strategic weight. Nigeria has been managing a prolonged gap between its OPEC quota and actual production capacity, driven by infrastructure theft, deferred maintenance, and underinvestment. A pipeline of 128 new wells, if converted to spud activity within the year, would represent one of the more active drilling cycles Nigeria has seen in recent memory and would require sustained rig availability, well-services mobilisation, and supply-chain readiness across the industry.

The pace at which these approvals translate into actual well spuds will depend on operator funding positions, rig contracting lead times, and continued security conditions across producing regions. Regulatory approval is an early-stage instrument — it establishes intent and legal clearance but does not constitute a signed drilling contract or a final investment decision. Market participants should treat these figures as a leading indicator of demand rather than confirmed procurement activity, and monitor operator-level announcements for contract awards and rig mobilisation notices.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

With 205 well interventions approved but no contracts yet confirmed, this is a monitoring and relationship-building moment rather than a procurement outreach trigger. Norwegian drilling and well-services companies should track which operators hold the relevant licences as disclosures emerge, and position themselves with local agents and NUPRC contacts ahead of anticipated contracting cycles. Once specific operators announce rig programmes or issue tenders, targeted outreach to procurement becomes appropriate.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Drilling:** 128 new well approvals represent potential rig demand; jackup and semi-submersible contractors should assess Nigeria rig availability and operator contracting timelines as disclosures emerge.
- **Service:** 77 re-entry approvals signal wireline, coiled-tubing, and workover demand — well-intervention service companies should engage local partners now to be positioned when operator programmes are confirmed.

- **Subsea/FPSO:** If a material share of the 128 new wells proves to be deepwater development wells, subsea equipment and FPSO support services could see incremental demand — monitor operator-level announcements for basin and water-depth breakdowns.
- **Pipeline:** Increased well activity onshore and nearshore typically generates incremental flowline and gathering-system work; pipeline service companies should track which onshore operators hold approvals.

[Original source: Google News query: NUPRC →](#)

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