

Uganda's recoverable oil reserves are currently estimated at 1.65 billion barrels.

BY ISMAIL MUSA LADU

With global pressure mounting over fuel shortages and rising energy costs, Uganda's oil sector is accelerating preparations to deliver first oil, as key infrastructure nears completion at major upstream projects.

At the Kingfisher oil field, more than 99 percent of the Central Processing Facility (CPF) is complete, with wells already drilled and ready for production. The milestone follows the successful conclusion of the first phase of the drilling campaign in February 2026, during which 18 wells were completed across three well pads.

The progress signals a critical step forward in Uganda's long-awaited entry into the league of oil-producing nations. However, even as anticipation builds among industry players and the private sector, the exact date for first oil remains uncertain.

While timelines have not been officially disclosed, expectations point to a possible production start between July and October 2026, though some analysts project a delay into 2027.

Speaking ahead of the 11th Annual Oil and Gas Convention in Kampala, the chief executive officer of the Uganda Chamber of Energy and Minerals, Mr Humphrey Asimwe, said Uganda is on course to achieve a historic milestone.

Uganda gears up for first oil despite timeline uncertainty



Workers at the Kingfisher oil field in Kikuube District on January 24, 2023. PHOTO/XINHUA

"While no one knows the exact date, Uganda is on track to hit a major milestone in 2026, with first oil finally on the horizon," he said.

Mr Asimwe added: "I am proud to witness this in my lifetime, but we must ensure that the country benefits sustainably over the next 20 to 30 years."

Uganda's recoverable oil reserves are currently estimated at 1.65 billion barrels, with peak production projected at about 190,000 barrels per day.

For the regulator, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), the emphasis is less on timelines and more on readiness. Ms Gloria Sebikari, the manager of cor-

porate affairs at PAU, said the focus is on ensuring that the country gets it right as it transitions into the production phase.

"As Uganda enters the production era, success will not only be measured by the first barrel of oil, but by the long-term value created for the country," she said.

She added that this approach aligns with Uganda's policy framework, including the National Oil and Gas Policy of 2008 and the National Petroleum Policy of 2025.

According to Ms Sebikari, substantial progress has been recorded across the petroleum value chain, with upstream developments at Tilenga and Kingfisher advancing steadily.

She added that the East African Crude Oil Pipeline, a key export route for Uganda's crude, is also well advanced, while developments at Kabalega Industrial Park in Hoima District are laying the groundwork for a refinery, petrochemical industries, and logistics hubs.

However, officials emphasise that achieving first oil goes beyond physical infrastructure. "It is about ensuring Uganda is institutionally, technically, and economically prepared to manage petroleum production responsibly and sustainably," Ms Sebikari said.

This includes strengthening regulatory systems, building technical capacity, and enhancing skills development to support long-term sector growth.

Significant gains have already been registered under the national content programme.

The sector has so far generated contracts worth \$2.3 billion (about Shs8.5 trillion) and created approximately 21,000 direct jobs.