

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR IRRIGATION AND
RELATED ACTIVITIES OF KOMSBERG, //KARAS REGION,
NAMIBIA**



**Socotra Islands Investments
(Pty) Ltd**

May 2021

1 INTRODUCTION

Socotra Islands Investments (Pty) Ltd, trading as Komsberg (The Proponent) has requested Geo Pollution Technologies (GPT) to apply for an environmental clearance certificate (ECC) or their agricultural project, located along the Orange River in the //Karas Region, Namibia (Figure 1). The ECC is required as per the Environmental Management Act No. 7 of 2007 (EMA). As per the requisite of the ECC application, an environmental assessment scoping report (SR) and environmental management plan (EMP) will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism's Directorate of Environmental Affairs (DEA).

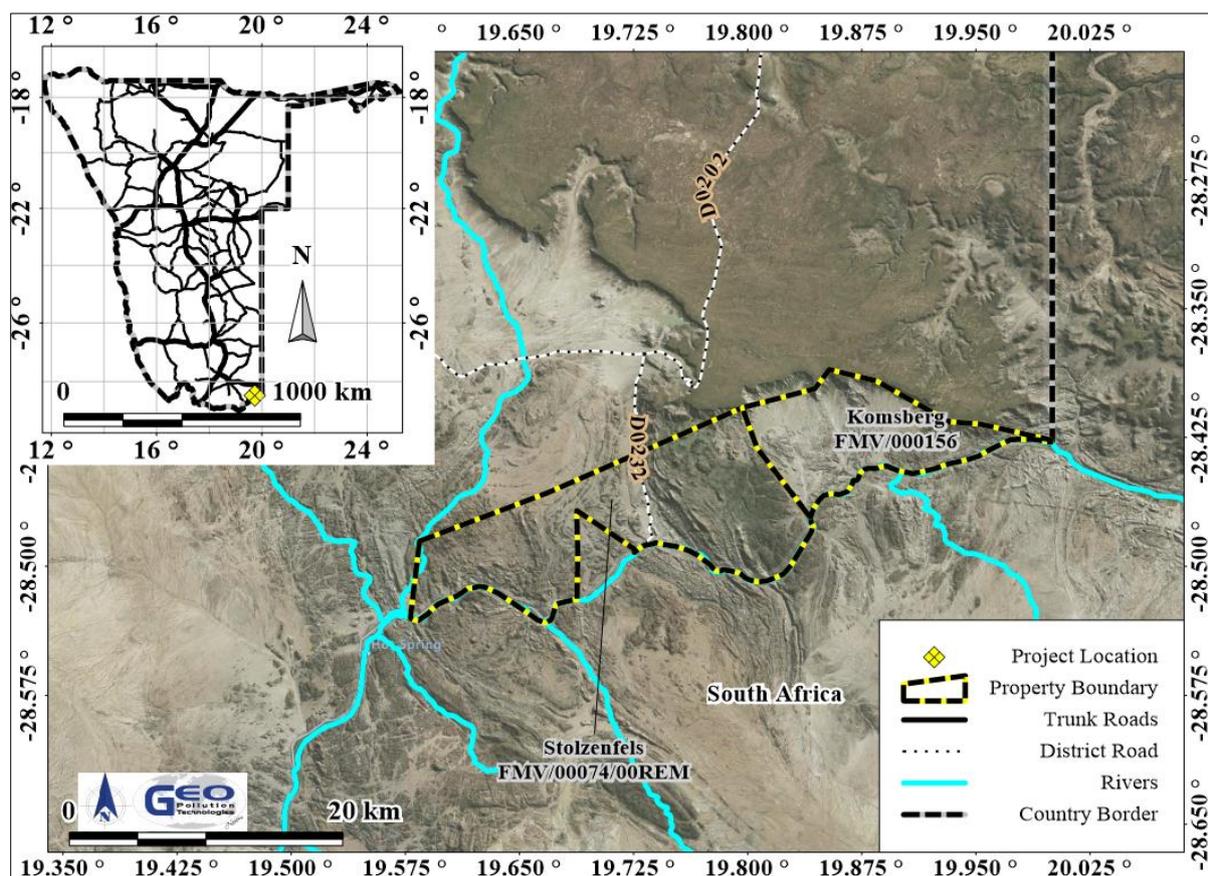


Figure 1. Project location

2 PURPOSE OF THE BID

With this background information document (BID), GPT aims to provide the DEA, authorities and interested and affected parties with information about the agricultural project and to register the ECC application with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.

With this BID, GPT aims to provide Interested and Affected Parties (“IAPs”) with information about the project and interact with them regarding it. IAPs are therefore invited to register with GPT for the project in order to:

- ◆ Provide GPT with additional information which should be taken into account in the assessment of impacts and during decision-making;
- ◆ Share any comments, issues or concerns related to the proposed development; and
- ◆ Review and comment on the reports and findings of the Environmental Assessment process.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Proponent's operations comprise the cultivation of table grapes, citrus and berries, for global export markets, over an area of 270 ha. Komsberg plans to expand their operations by 240 ha. Water from the Orange River is abstracted for irrigation purposes throughout the year. The environmental assessment will consider all agricultural activities and related support services and infrastructure. Such infrastructure include fuel storage, electricity generation and waste management. The agricultural project has been divided into four phases namely the planning-, development-, operational- and decommissioning phases. A brief outline of expected activities for each phase is detailed below. The project is divided into two overlapping and integrated operations. Existing operations and expansion operations (planned operations). As the entire agricultural project is however integrated, all of the phases as mentioned have bearing on the environmental assessment.

3.1 PLANNING PHASE

Although there are some existing operations which would traditionally be regarded as past the planning phase, the proposed planned expansion will tie in with existing operations and therefore the planning phase incorporates existing operations. It entails not only overall operational planning, but also amenities and permit acquisition while also including setting up of various agreements between contractors, suppliers, state departments and adjacent land owners. Some of the agreements which may be considered are provided as examples below:

- ◆ NamPower negotiations,
- ◆ Water rights and permits,
- ◆ Setting labour contracts (including tender documentation for contractors),
- ◆ Obtaining an ECC (as per this process),
- ◆ Where not in place, obtain permits and approvals from local and national authorities including the Ministry of Mines and Energy (consumer licence),
- ◆ Ensure correct zoning and subdivision of the property, if applicable,
- ◆ Make provisions to have a health, safety and environmental coordinator to implement the EMP,
- ◆ Ensure provisions for a fund to cater for restoration or rehabilitation activities in the event of environmental incidents or pollution,
- ◆ Ensure all appointed contractors and employees enter into an agreement with the Proponent which includes the EMP,
- ◆ Maintain a reporting system to report on aspects of construction and maintenance, operations and decommissioning as outlined in the EMP. This is a requirement of the DEA.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT PHASE

The development phase (also traditionally known as the construction phase for infrastructure related projects) will begin with land preparation, earth works as well as fencing any expansion area. This phase will mainly pertain to what is referred to as the expansion area (planned operations). The development phase will include the following:

- ◆ A temporary construction camp for building component requirements,
- ◆ Upgrading and development of access roads,
- ◆ Site office and storage facilities,
- ◆ Ablution facilities and associated septic tanks,
- ◆ Land preparation for cultivation (clearing, soil, analysis and modification, tillage, weed control, soil drainage, cover crops and wind breaks),
- ◆ Infrastructure establishment (water pipelines, electrical power supply, etc.).

Namibian law requires all fuel installations to be constructed and maintained according to South African National Standards (SANS) 10089 and 10131, or better. Construction activities will constitute the installation and any maintenance of the tank inside a suitably bunded area. Concrete spill slabs will be cast in areas where fuel will be offloaded and dispensed. During operations, maintenance and minor repairs will be performed on infrastructure as required. This may include painting, servicing and / or replacement of equipment.

3.3 OPERATIONAL PHASE

The operational phase refers to the actual planting, growing and harvesting of the agricultural produce of choice (which may include berries and citrus, but mainly focus on table grapes). In a broad sense this will include the following activities:

- ◆ Planting of chosen crop,
- ◆ Fertilisation and irrigation,
- ◆ Weed and pest control,
- ◆ Nutrient and soil management,
- ◆ Harvesting, storage and packing of produce,
- ◆ Maintenance of support infrastructure and machines.

3.4 DECOMMISSIONING PHASE

Should the Proponent decide to discontinue their involvement in the area, a decommissioning phase may be initiated. All supporting infrastructure – such as water pipelines, electricity supply, access and vineyards roads, etc., will have to be removed and or rehabilitated to a state either useable for an alternative agricultural project or to its original state. The Proponent would therefore be liable for the rehabilitation of all operations taken over and expanded upon. Rehabilitation should further be conducted for any component of the project, which may, during the life of the project, become redundant or be decommissioned. An example would be any residential units or workshop/packhouse areas.

3.5 PRELIMINARY IDENTIFIED IMPACTS

During the Environmental Assessment all components of the environment will be considered, however only those components which are being impacted on significantly or are deemed to be sensitive will be assessed. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Localised data generation and increase of environmental information / knowledge,
- ◆ Reduction in localised and regional unemployment,
- ◆ Skills transfer and training,
- ◆ Noise and dust nuisance,
- ◆ Increased soil salinity,
- ◆ Increased traffic collision risk,
- ◆ Increased water use,
- ◆ Increased demand on essential and governmental services (education, health, etc.),
- ◆ Possible increase in criminal activity,
- ◆ Increase of Namibian fresh produce,
- ◆ Increased economic resilience (due to direct capital investment),
- ◆ Localised increase in greenhouse gas emissions,
- ◆ Human component (employee and visitor health and safety),
- ◆ Infrastructure (aesthetics, fire, integrity, damage to services, etc.),
- ◆ Groundwater, surface water and soil (hydrocarbon spills, waste, pollutants),
- ◆ Ecosystem and biodiversity degradation (pesticide use, drainage water, etc.).

4 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

GPT invites all IAPs to provide in writing, any issues and suggestions regarding the project. This correspondence must include:

- ◆ Name and surname,
- ◆ Organization represented or private interest,
- ◆ Position in the organization,
- ◆ Contact details,
- ◆ Any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which you may have in the approval or refusal of the application.

All contributions become public knowledge and will be circulated along with the reports as per the EMA requirements. The comments, inputs and suggestions will also be submitted to the DEA along with how any issues have been addressed in the environmental assessment.

The public participation process will remain ongoing during the environmental assessment. However, all comments and concerns should be provided to GPT to ensure incorporation into the final report. For any additional information the project team may be contacted at:



Geo Pollution Technologies (Pty) Ltd.

Telephone: (+264-61) 257411

Fax: (+264) 88626368

E-mail: komsberg@thenamib.com