



Good times: TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Pouyanne. Photo: AFP/SCANPIX

## Golden block ready to shine: TotalEnergies set to take champagne off ice after latest tests as giant Namibian oil discovery

Early results from debut drill stem tests on potential 5 billion barrel discovery are positive

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By [Iain Esau](#) in London

*Initial results from a critical production test being run on the offshore wildcat that discovered TotalEnergies' huge Venus oilfield in Namibia's prolific Orange basin, are promising, according to well-placed sources.*

*Venus could be Sub-Saharan Africa's biggest ever offshore oil discovery, with Namibian state oil company stating recently that it is currently estimated to hold 5 billion barrels of oil in place.*

*If more oil is found to the west - a drilling campaign is underway - then this resource estimate could feasibly approach 12 billion barrels, Upstream reported in 2022.*

*Drilled in about 3000 metres of water in February 2022, the Venus-1X discovery well hit 84 metres of net pay in a high-quality Lower Cretaceous sandstone reservoir.*

*This probe found light oil and associated gas after being drilled to a total depth of 6296 metres in Block 2913B, but was not tested at the time.*

*After wrapping up that wildcat, TotalEnergies spent the next year or so studying the sub-surface of Block 2913B and Block 2912, immediately to the west, eventually pulling together a two-rig exploration and appraisal campaign that would use up a major portion of its global 2023 exploration budget.*

*Northern Ocean's semi-submersible rig Deepsea Mira is currently on location at Venus-1X carrying out drill stem tests, with Upstream told by informed sources that early results are positive*



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One source said the partners “aren’t disappointed” by the results so far, which implies they have at least met expectations in terms of the reservoir quality and producibility.

Another contract said at least two flow tests were run over the last week or so, with hydrocarbons flowing to the surface on both, with flares understood to be visible on both occasions.

The first is believed to have been carried out on 5 September, while the second was run in the early hours of 7 September. A knowledgeable source told Upstream that “testing is soon to be completed”.

This timing confirms what TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Pouyanne told analysts in July when he said results from the testing operation should be available in early September and would be critical in determining commerciality of a project in more than three kilometres of water.

“Productivity is important. A 15,000 barrel per day well will be fine. If it’s 5000 bpd it’s not fine,” he said at the time.

If these test results meet expectations, they will go a long way towards underpinning a phased commercial development at the ultra-deepwater field, probably based around multiple floating production, storage and offloading vessels.

Deepsea Mira is remains on location at Venus-1X, according to mapping data from marine intelligence provider VesselsValue, supported by platform supply vessels Greatships Manisha and Shepherd Tide out of Walvis Bay.

This was the semisub’s debut probe in Namibia, although the initial plan for the rig had been for it to carry out drill stem tests on the Venus-1A appraisal that had just been completed by the Tungsten Explorer drillship.

However, what are thought to be technical issues meant a change of plan that involved a test of Venus-1X.

The Venus-1A probe was drilled some 13 kilometres from Venus-1X, with Pouyanne saying the results were “very positive” and the “the oil column is very big,” confirming an earlier Upstream report.

On completing the Venus-1X well, Deepsea Mira is expected to carry out a flow test on the Venus-1A appraisal well.

The Tungsten Explorer, meanwhile, continues to drill ahead on TotalEnergies’ Nara-1X exploration well in Block 2912, targeting what could be a major westward extension of the Venus field or, potentially, a huge separate structure.