



**Environmental Management Consultants**

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
SOUTH AFRICAN CHAPTER

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**15 August 2014**

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Dear «Title» «Surname»

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL  
AUTHORISATION PROCESS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)**

**PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BY SENEKAL BOERDERY NEAR  
MKUZE, NORTHERN KWAZULU-NATAL**

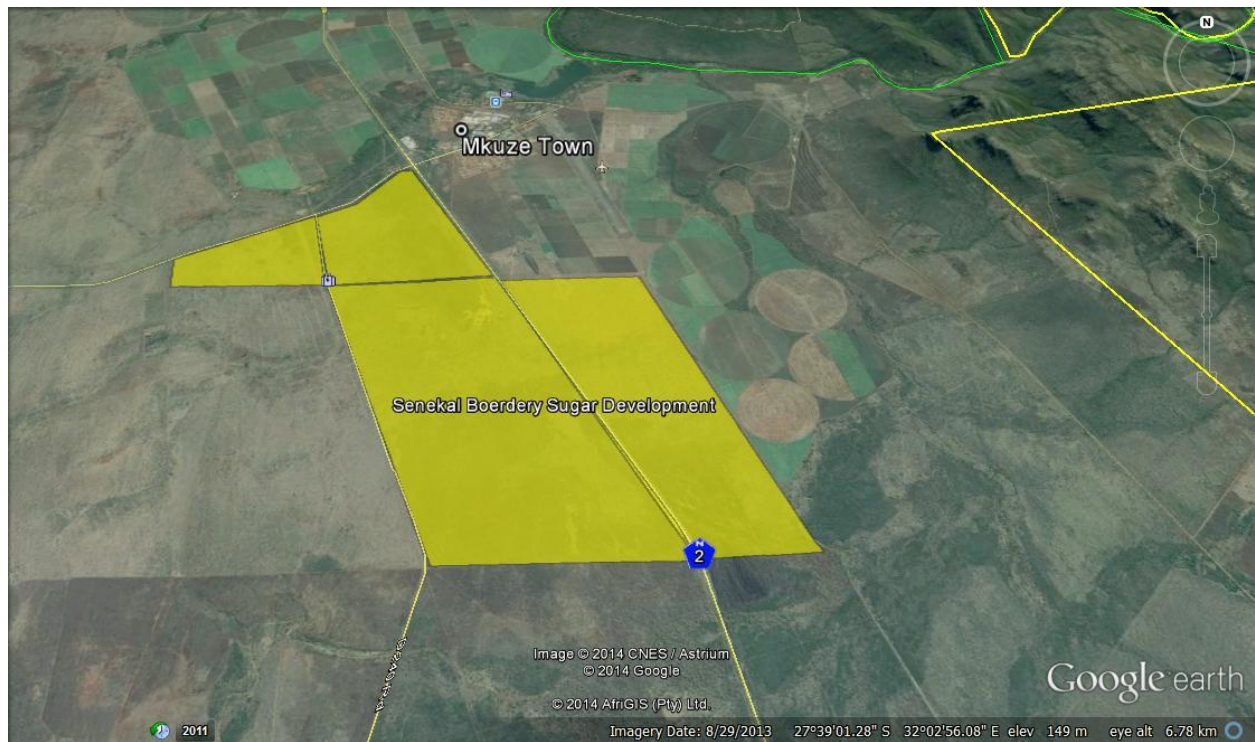
**PROJECT REFERENCE NO: DC27/0011/2014 KZN/EIA/0001601/2014**

Senekal Boerdery has appointed ACER (Africa) Environmental Management Consultants (ACER) to undertake an environmental authorisation process, via an Environmental Impact Assessment, in order to obtain Environmental Authorization (EA) from the relevant competent authority (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA)) for the proposed establishment of approximately 1,072 ha of sugarcane near the town of Mkuze, Northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Senekal Boerdery is planning to re-establish commercial agriculture (sugar cane) on a site previously planted to commercial cotton and sisal. The proposed project involves the planting of approximately 1,072 ha of irrigated sugar cane on four farms located approximately 1 to 5 km south of the town of Mkuze, east and west of the N2, which bisects the farms (Figure 1). As part of the re-establishment process, the existing irrigation network on Senekal Boerdery's properties will be extended to supply water to the re-established sugar cane fields.

**History of the Site**

Prior to 1999, the proposed sites for the new sugar cane fields were commercially farmed and planted to cotton and sisal. The cotton and sisal were then removed and, since then, no agriculture has taken place on these lands. In the intervening years, the old fields have been re-colonised with grass and acacia trees.



**Figure 1 Proposed establishment of approximately 1,072 hectares of sugarcane by Senekal Boerdery to the south of Mkuze** (Source: Google Earth 2014)

Please note that the proposed development falls marginally inside the iSimangaliso Wetland Park 10 km Buffer Zone, the Ubombo Mountain Reserve 5 km Buffer Zone and the Zululand Rhino Reserve 5 km Buffer Zone; therefore, listed activities in Listing Notice 3 (No R 546 of 2010) apply.

### Environmental Requirements

In terms of the amended EIA Regulations published under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), as amended, the proposed establishment of approximately 1,072 ha of sugarcane triggers listed activities in Listing Notice 1 (No. R.544 of June 2010), Listing Notice 2 (No. R.545 of June 2010) and Listing Notice 3 (No. R.546 of June 2010), in terms of section 24(2) and 24D of NEMA, which requires environmental authorisation via the undertaking of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) is the competent authority for the issuing of environmental authorisation for this proposed development. ACER will fulfil the role and responsibilities of Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment and the associated public participation process, and to submit the required application and supporting documentation to EDTEA for consideration and decision-making. Included in the supporting documentation will be the application for the relevant permits required from the KZN Heritage Resource Agency (Amafa). A water use license will be required from the Department of Water and Sanitation while licenses/permits from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) will be applied for once an Environmental Authorisation has been received by the applicant.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you, as an Interested and/or Affected Party (I&AP), with background information and to invite you to submit concerns, issues or suggestions regarding the proposed project. These will inform the assessment and application to the competent authority.

### **Role of I&APs during the Environmental Impact Assessment Process**

The Environmental Authorisation Process is comprised of three main components, each of which requires the input of I&APs:

- ❑ Scoping study and report, to identify issues that provide focus for the Environmental Impact Assessment.
- ❑ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and EIA report, involving specialist studies of potential positive and negative impacts.
- ❑ Review of the EIA report and Environmental Management Programme by EDTEA to inform a decision as to whether or not to authorise the proposed development.

#### **Involvement during Scoping**

The purpose of Scoping is to obtain a good understanding of the environmental issues associated with the proposed development, including positive and negative impacts, and to focus the Impact Assessment to ensure that only significant issues and reasonable alternatives are considered. Achieving this requires input from relevant authorities, affected landowners, the public, stakeholders and the EIA Team. Public participation is an important part of Scoping during which comments about the proposed development are received from I&APs. These comments help the EIA Team to identify important issues, potential environmental impacts and feasible and reasonable alternatives for the proposed development, all of which are incorporated into a Scoping Report. Two opportunities exist for you, as an I&AP, to contribute during Scoping: after notification about the project, i.e. after reading this Background Information Letter and other engagements to be afforded as part of project announcement and during the public review of the draft Scoping Report.

#### **Involvement during the EIA**

Significant issues raised during Scoping are examined further in the Impact Assessment, including important issues identified for further investigation by specialists, such as ecologists and archaeologists. Specialists will undertake detailed studies of potential positive and negative impacts that will be incorporated into an integrated EIA report. Two more opportunities exist for you as an I&AP to contribute during the Impact assessment: during on-going I&AP consultation and during the public review of the draft Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

#### **Involvement during the Appeal Period**

Comments from I&APs are addressed in the final Environmental Impact Assessment Report, which is then submitted to EDTEA for review, after which EDTEA either authorises or declines the proposed development. With authorisation, conditions are stipulated that must be met. The final opportunity arises for your involvement as an I&AP once environmental authorisation has been issued. After reviewing the environmental authorisation, you have the opportunity of submitting an appeal if you have valid reasons which can be substantiated for objecting to the authorisation.

### Potential Issues for Consideration

A range of possible positive and negative impacts are anticipated for the proposed development. Below are a number of social and biophysical parameters which should be considered by I&APs while commenting on the proposed development:

Purpose, need and desirability	Social and socio-economic aspects
Health and safety	Biodiversity aspects
Ecological aspects	Cultural heritage resource effect
Visual effects	Cumulative effects

### Invitation to Participate

Your comments are important in identifying environmental issues (biophysical, economic and social) that will help focus the assessment and enhance decision making. Your comments will be addressed and included in an Issues and Response Report, which will accompany the Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment Reports. EDTEA, as the competent environmental authority, will review the reports and verify that the relevant issues have been adequately addressed within the assessment process.

Please make use of the following opportunities to participate:

- Examine and respond to information in this Background Information Letter and in the Draft Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.
- Register as an Interested and Affected Party in order to receive information and to record your comments.
- Interact with the EIA Team and raise issues and concerns. Details of meetings and workshops will be communicated at the appropriate time.
- Contact the Public Participation Office to obtain further project information and to raise issues and concerns.

It is important that you take note of differing deadlines for the submission of comments during the environmental assessment process.

### Public Participation Office Contact Details

**ACER (Africa) Environmental Management Consultants**

Giles Churchill or Charlene Weber

P O Box 503, Mtunzini, 3867

Tel: 035 340 2715 Fax: 035 340 2232

E-mail: [Senekalsugar@acerafrica.co.za](mailto:Senekalsugar@acerafrica.co.za)

Please complete the accompanying comment sheet and return it to the ACER Public Participation Office (Ms Charlene Weber) by 11 September 2014.

Your participation is valued and will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Giles Churchill', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**ACER (Africa) Environmental Management Consultants**  
Giles Churchill  
Environmental Assessment Practitioner