

# **DRAFT CONSULTATION SCOPING REPORT**

## ***AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ON PORTION 525 OF FARM No. 42 STRATHSOMERS ESTATE AND ASSOCIATED IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE ON PORTION 523 OF FARM No. 42 STRATHSOMERS ESTATE, SUNDAYS RIVER VALLEY MUNICIPALITY***

**October 2018**



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<b>Title:</b>	Draft Consultation Scoping Report, Agricultural Development on Portion 525 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate and Associated Irrigation Infrastructure on Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, Sundays River Valley Municipality, (October 2018)
<b>Purpose of this report:</b>	<p>This Scoping Report forms part of a series of reports and information documents that are being provided during the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process for the proposed agricultural development.</p> <p>As per Appendix 2 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended), the objectives of the Scoping Process are to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify relevant policies and legislation relevant to the activity;</li> <li>• motivate the need and desirability of the proposed activity in the context of the preferred location</li> <li>• identify and confirm the preferred activity, technology alternative and/ or site alternative; or if no alternatives, including location alternatives were investigated, the motivation for such;</li> <li>• identify the key issues to be addressed in the assessment phase;</li> <li>• confirm the level of assessment, methodology and expertise required as well as the extent of further consultation to be undertaken to determine the impacts and risks the activity will impose on the preferred site to inform the location of the development footprint within the preferred site; and</li> <li>• identify suitable measures to avoid, manage or mitigate identified impacts and to determine the extent of the residual risks that need to be managed and monitored.</li> </ul> <p>The primary objective of this Scoping Report is to present (to key stakeholders and affected Organs of State) an overview of the project, including key issues, as well as to confirm the preferred alternative that requires assessment in the EIA phase.</p>
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The proponent, Umgcambo Trading (Pty) Ltd, proposes to develop a portion of Portion 525 of Farm Strathsomers Estate No. 42 (~154.28ha, hereafter known as Umgcambo), in the Sundays River Valley Municipality (SRVM), for the establishment of citrus orchards and associated infrastructure (e.g. new dam, internal roads, irrigation infrastructure, logistical services area).

The proponent has obtained a Water Use Licence from The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) for the taking of water from a water resource in terms of Section 21(a) of the National Water Act, which entitles them to utilise 100ha (900 000m<sup>3</sup> per annum) of water from the LSRWUA canal system. Irrigation of the proposed agricultural development requires the construction of a new dam with a capacity of ~80 000m<sup>3</sup> (~4 ha footprint) and the installation of irrigation pipelines of varying diameters. Irrigation water for the development is proposed to be supplied from the LSRWUA canal system, via a pipeline with an internal diameter of ø500mm and a length of ~1,5km, to be installed on an adjacent property, Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, which is owned by the same landowner. The pipeline will convey water from an existing dam located on Portion 523 and is proposed to follow the fenceline of that property until it reaches the boundary of Umgcambo, at which point it is proposed to be installed under the DR01976 to connect into the new dam to be constructed on Umgcambo.

Access to Umgcambo is proposed off the gravel DR01976, via an existing access point and the nearest town to Umgcambo, Kirkwood, is located ~6.8km northwest of the site (see Locality Map in Chapter Two of the report). The nearest boundary of the Addo Elephant National Park (AENP) is located more than 10km north of Umgcambo and therefore, project activities proposed to take place on this property do not trigger listed activities which would require the assessment of impacts on the National Park. The installation of the irrigation water pipeline is proposed to take place on Portion 523, which is adjacent to Umgcambo. While Portion 523 is located within 10km of the AENP, the installation of the irrigation water pipeline does not trigger any listed activities, which would require the assessment of impacts on the National Park (i.e. activities in Listing Notice 3).

In terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended), published in GN R326, 327, 325 and 324, promulgated under Chapter Five of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMAA), and published in Government Gazette 40772 on the 7 April 2017, the project requires full Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (Scoping and EIA), prior to the commencement of any activities on the site due to, amongst others, activities listed in GN R325, namely:

*“15. The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation, excluding where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for -...”*

At this stage of the assessment process a cautious approach has been adopted towards the identification of listed activities, and where there is uncertainty as to whether a listed activity applies to this project, it has been included. The following listed activities potentially require Environmental Authorisation:

- Listing Notice 1 (GN R327): 9. (i) and (ii); 10. (i) and (ii); and 24. (ii) (c)
- Listing Notice 2 (GN R325): 16.
- Listing Notice 3 (GN R324): 2. a. ii. (dd); 4. a. i. (ee); and 10. a. i. (ee)

Chapter Four of this report provides details of the listed activities which require Environmental Authorisation. The project proponent has appointed Public Process Consultants as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake the Scoping and EIA for the project. The competent authority who must consider and decide upon this application is the Provincial Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), Sarah Baartman Region.

Subject to the outcome of the assessment process, specialist studies, technical input and consultation process, the project proponent, Umgcambo Trading (Pty) Ltd, intends to utilise the agricultural potential of the land for the establishment of citrus orchards. Umgcambo measures ~154.28ha in extent and is

zoned Agriculture I. It is anticipated that a portion of Umgcambo will not be deemed suitable for development, subject to the recommendations by the various specialists, as well as technical input (aquatic resources and associated buffers, areas required to meet biodiversity targets, soil suitability, slope etc). The area to be developed will be informed by the various specialist assessments through the assessment process.

In order to provide logistical support to the development it is proposed that a logistical services area of ~2ha is constructed to include offices and a store for tractors, trailers, maintenance equipment, as well as a fully enclosed bunded, roofed facility of 30m<sup>3</sup> for temporary chemical storage; mess area and ablution facilities (washing and toilets); loading and collection zone for the delivery and collection of product; and a new access road around the facility, as well as a manager's house and other future buildings. The additional services infrastructure required to support the logistical services area will require input from a qualified civil engineer, as well as a traffic specialist.

Additional power supply will be required in order to pump the irrigation water out of the proposed new dam on Umgcambo. Electricity is available up to the existing dam on the adjacent property, Portion 523. An extension to the existing electrical infrastructure of ~1km in length from the existing infrastructure to the new dam on Umgcambo will be required. Written confirmation is required from Eskom regarding the spare capacity of this line to provide the additional electricity required to service the proposed development as well as approval of the proposed line extension.

The proposed agricultural development on Umgcambo can be divided into the following phases, which are outlined in more detail in the sections below:

- Preconstruction
- Construction
- Operational

### **Preconstruction Phase**

The fruit proposed to be produced on site is predominantly for international markets, with some of the fruit to be processed (juiced) for local markets. In order to meet the requirements of export stock, seed (the foundation block seed) is required to be booked and purchased from a certified agency, the Citrus Foundation. This is booked approximately two years in advance in order to secure the seed, which includes a financial deposit.

The seed is provided to a certified nursery for a two year grow-out period, during which the seeds are germinated and the seedlings grown to sapling stage. Meticulous coordination is required between the Citrus Foundation for the purchase of the seed, the nursery for grow-out, and the citrus producer, in order to meet contractual obligations for harvesting and export of the crop. This is an on-going process, which is carefully timed and coordinated to allow the development of the site to take place seamlessly over the development timeframe proposed by Umgcambo.

### **Construction Phase**

The project will entail the clearing of vegetation, levelling of the site, and the installation of the drip/micro irrigation system, as well as the establishment of the bulk irrigation infrastructure (i.e. pipeline and proposed dam), prior to the planting of the saplings. Once the site is prepared, citrus orchards will be established (refer to the operational phase of the development). It is anticipated that vegetation clearing, landscaping, site preparation and planting will be done both by hand and with the aid of suitable earth moving equipment (excavators, bulldozers, TLBs). No workers' accommodation will be provided on site during the construction phase.

Site preparation will entail the following activities on site:

- Clearing of indigenous vegetation;
- Landscaping and levelling the site for citrus orchards, as well as to provide runoff control and stormwater management;
- Establishment of internal unpaved service roads;

- Pipeline connection to the existing outlet associated with the dam on Portion 523 and installation of the ø500mm irrigation pipe to Umgcambo;
- Construction of the new irrigation dam (~80 000m<sup>3</sup>) on Umgcambo;
- Installation of internal water reticulation and irrigation infrastructure;
- Construction of the logistical services area and new access road; and
- Construction of the manager's house
- Construction of associated domestic water and effluent management systems
- Planting of orchards and windbreaks (if necessary).

Site preparation needs to be completed to coincide with the planting of the trees, which occurs annually between September and March.

### **Operational Phase**

Once the site is suitably prepared, the area will be utilised for the establishment of citrus orchards for predominantly international markets, with some fruit being sent for processing (juicing) for local markets. It is also the intention of the project proponent to plant vegetables for the local market (butternut and pumpkin) in between the orchards until the trees reach production stage.

Equipment required for the new operations will be stored in the proposed new storage sheds and workshop areas on Umgcambo. The following operational phase activities are associated with the project:

- Water for the development will be supplied from the LSRWUA canals which will be reticulated from the proposed new balancing dam; and
- It is anticipated that a number of additional seasonal (96) and permanent (11) employment opportunities will be created by the project.

For more detail regarding the project description see Chapter Two of the Report.

### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The vegetation on the properties surrounding Umgcambo to the north, west and east appears to be largely near-natural, although some modification (cut lines and vehicle tracks) is evident. In addition, these properties show various levels of degradation, presumably associated with domestic livestock grazing and game grazing. Portion 523, owned by the same landowner, is directly adjacent to the north eastern boundary of Umgcambo, and is currently engaged in commercial agricultural activities including citrus orchards, and vegetable production. Portion 523, upon which the irrigation pipe is proposed to be installed, is bound on its western, northern and eastern boundaries by cultivation. The "Sundays River Valley" area is located ~2.1km north of Umgcambo and is predominantly under intensive cultivation.

The site visit and preliminary input from the vegetation specialist confirmed that the vegetation on Umgcambo is Sundays Spekboom Thicket.

The condition of the vegetation is considered highly degraded in some areas, specifically towards the southern boundary of the farm, and is likely due to past wildlife and domestic livestock grazing and browsing. This is evidenced by several grassy areas dominated by *Cynodon dactylon* (Bermuda Grass), patches of *Pentzia incana* (Karoobossie) and *Mesembryanthemum aitonis* (Brakslaai). Additionally, some trees, such as *Pappea capensis* (Pruimbessiebos) and *Portulacaria afra* (Spekboom), showed visible signs of browsing (i.e. umbrella shaped). *Opuntia ficus-indica* (Prickly Pear) and *Opuntia aurantiaca* (Jointed Cactus), possible indicators of a degraded vegetation state, occurred throughout the farm. Modified areas on the farm are represented by various cut lines and existing vehicle tracks, as well as footpaths.

The condition of the vegetation is in a relatively good ecological state to the west of the farm, with moderate degradation levels based on species diversity, intactness and a high level of impenetrability, despite the presence of *Opuntia ficus-indica* (Prickly Pear) and *Opuntia aurantiaca* (Jointed Cactus),

as well as existing vehicle tracks and footpaths. Towards the northern boundary of the farm, including the steeply sloped areas, the condition of the vegetation is mostly intact, with a higher level of impenetrability (i.e. fewer grassy areas, lower prevalence of *Cynodon dactylon* (Bermuda Grass) and decreased levels of visible browsing).

The proposed pipeline on Portion 523 will be installed adjacent to the fenceline along an existing vehicle track within the existing citrus orchards. In the road reserve of the DR01976 road, where the irrigation pipe is proposed to cross under the road, the vegetation is irreversibly modified and edge effects have resulted due to the permanent removal of natural vegetation along this road.

The NFEPA Wetlands Map delineates one Unchanneled valley-bottom wetland, in this case a farm dam (artificial wetland) within 500m of the southern boundary of the farm. These onsite observations were supplemented by the review of relevant aerial imagery and planning frameworks for Umgcambo and are subject to assessment by a vegetation, as well as an aquatic specialist during the EIA Phase of the assessment.

For further information regarding the affected environment see Chapter Three of the Report.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

This Scoping and EIA Process is being implemented in four phases, the details of which are outlined in Chapter Four of this report:

- Pre-Application Scoping Phase (**WE ARE HERE**)
- Application and Scoping Phase
- Environmental Impact Assessment Phase
- Decision Making and Appeal Period

Public Process Consultants has been appointed as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to conduct the Scoping and EIA, including Public Participation for the proposed development. Notice of Intention to commence with Scoping and EIA, dated 22 May 2018, was submitted to the competent authority, DEDEAT, Sarah Baartman Region. The notice was also sent to all identified Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) and Organs of State on 23 May 2018.

In order to commence the legislated portion of the Scoping and EIA process, an Application Form for Environmental Authorisation in terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended) is being prepared and will be submitted to the competent authority prior to the release of the Consultation Scoping Report (CSR) for the legislated 30-day consultation period. All registered I&APs will be notified in writing of the release of the CSR for the legislated 30-day comment period.

The Final Scoping Report (FSR), together with the Plan of Study (PoS) for EIA, will be prepared for submission to the Provincial DEDEAT for their decision-making, within 44 days of submission of the Application Form. The FSR will include all the comments received from I&APs during the Project Announcement Phase, as well as the review of the Draft Consultation Scoping Report (Draft CSR) and CSR. Should DEDEAT accept the Scoping Report and approve the PoS for EIA, the assessment process will enter into the EIA Phase.

For further detail regarding the Scoping Phase of the assessment process, including Public Participation, see Chapter Four of the Report. For further detail regarding the Plan of Study (PoS) for EIA, see Chapter Six of the Report.

### **Identification of Issues**

Issues and concerns identified for inclusion in the Scoping Report that require specialist assessment in the EIA phase have been identified using the following methods:

- A Site Visit.
- Preliminary input from specialists.
- Desktop review of regional planning documentation and frameworks.

- Scoping of issues and concerns with I&APs, including authorities and affected Organs of State, through correspondence received (emails, comment forms) in response to the project announcement.

Based on issues identified thus far in the process, the table below indicates the specialist studies/ input required for the EIA Phase of the Assessment Process:

Specialist Study	Broad Scope of Assessment	Proposed Specialist
Ecological Specialist Assessment	To include an assessment of the potential impacts on vegetation and fauna (desktop), as well as the delineation of sensitive No-Go areas; and the determination of suitable buffer zones. To include an assessment of the impacts on aquatic features identified on the site and within a 500m radius, including wetlands and watercourses. To determine the Present Ecological State of the site and confirm the mapping of CBAs and ESAs, as included in various biodiversity planning frameworks (e.g. ECBCP and NFEPA mapping resources). To provide recommendations for management/ mitigation of residual impacts.	Deborah Vromans, Ecological Specialist  Marisa Jacoby, Public Process Consultants
Phase 1 Paleontological Impact Assessment	To determine palaeontological features on site and the impact of the proposed development thereon. To provide recommendations for management/ mitigation of residual impacts.	Dr John Almond, Natura Viva
Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment	To determine archaeological features on site and assess the potential impacts on these features. To provide recommendations for management/ mitigation of residual impacts.	Dr Johan Binneman, Eastern Cape Heritage Consultants
Soil Suitability Assessment	To determine the agricultural potential of the soils for citrus production and provide amelioration measures for soil limiting factors. Desktop slope analysis.	Danie Kritzinger, Agrimotion
Traffic Impact Assessment	To determine the impact of additional trip generation on the public road network, as well as the suitability and safety of the proposed access point.	Cary Hastie, Engineering Advice and Services
<b>TECHNICAL TEAM</b>		
Irrigation Infrastructure	To estimate the quantity of water required for irrigation, and to be stored on site in a proposed new dam. To confirm associated irrigation infrastructure (including drip/ micro irrigation) layout, including pipe diameters and length, as well as dam location, dimensions, storage capacity and design.	Jaco Kruger
Roads and Wet Services	To determine the footprint and locality of additional structures on site (i.e. offices and store; mess area, ablution facilities; loading and collection zone; manager's house and future buildings; as well as a road surrounding the facility), as well as bulk services requirements (i.e. domestic water, effluent management and stormwater management).	JJ Spies Civil Engineers

The full specialist Terms of Reference (ToR) are contained in Chapter Six of the Report. The results of the specialist studies and other relevant project information will be integrated into the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Draft EIA Report).

### Current Stage in the Process

The project is currently at the stage where a Draft CSR including the PoS for EIA (Chapter Six) is being released for a 30-day authority and I&AP review period. This step in the process will be followed by the submission of the Application Form to the competent authority, the inclusion of the comments received from I&APs during this period, into the CSR, and the legislated 30-day comment period on the CSR.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1.1</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND AND PROJECT OVERVIEW	1.1
1.1.1 About the Project Proponent	1.3
1.2 PROJECT NEED AND DESIRABILITY	1.4
1.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR SCOPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT	1.6
1.4 EIA TEAM	1.7
1.5 DETAILS AND EXPERTISE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRACTITIONER AND EXPERTISE TO CARRY OUT SCOPING AND EIA	1.8
1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE SCOPING PROCESS	1.9
<b>CHAPTER TWO: PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>2.1</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION	2.1
2.1.1 Proposed Project Location	2.1
2.2 PROPOSED PROJECT SCOPE AND ACTIVITIES	2.4
2.2.1 Preconstruction	2.6
2.2.2 Construction	2.6
2.2.2.1 <i>Vegetation Clearing and Landscaping</i>	2.7
2.2.2.2 <i>Construction of Logistical Services Area</i>	2.7
2.2.2.3 <i>Internal Roads and Access</i>	2.7
2.2.2.4 <i>Installation of Irrigation Infrastructure and Dam Construction</i>	2.8
2.2.2.5 <i>Windbreaks</i>	2.9
2.2.3 Operational	2.9
2.2.3.1 <i>Orchard Establishment</i>	2.9
2.2.3.2 <i>Water Use Entitlements and Availability</i>	2.10
2.3 CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION	2.10
2.4 PROJECT SCHEDULE	2.10
2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS	2.11
<b>CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>3.1</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION	3.1
3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT	3.2
3.2.1 Site Locality and Overview	3.2
3.2.2 Surrounding Land-use	3.4
3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES	3.6
3.3.1 Biological	3.6
3.3.1.1 <i>Aquatic Vegetation</i>	3.6
3.3.1.2 <i>Terrestrial Vegetation</i>	3.8
3.3.1.3 <i>Site Observations</i>	3.13
3.3.1.4 <i>Fauna</i>	3.17
3.3.2 Physical	3.17
3.3.2.1 <i>Climate</i>	3.17
3.3.2.2 <i>Geohydrology and Surface Water</i>	3.17
3.3.2.3 <i>Geology and Topography</i>	3.17
3.3.2.4 <i>Agricultural Potential</i>	3.19
3.3.3 Heritage and Cultural	3.20
3.3.4 Socio-economic (Social and Economic)	3.21
3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS	3.22
<b>CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>4.1</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION	4.1
4.2 LEGAL CONTEXT FOR THIS EIA	4.1
4.3 LEGISLATION AND GUIDELINES APPLICABLE TO THIS EIA	4.4
4.3.1 National Legislation	4.4



4.3.1.1	<i>The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996):</i>	4.4
4.3.1.2	<i>National Environmental Management Act (as amended) and the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2014 (as amended), published under Chapter Five of NEMA (GN R326, GN R327, GN R325 and GN R324):</i>	4.4
4.3.1.3	<i>National Environmental Management Biodiversity (Act 10 of 2004):</i>	4.5
4.3.1.4	<i>National Forests Act (Act 84 of 1998):</i>	4.5
4.3.1.5	<i>National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999):</i>	4.6
4.3.1.6	<i>National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998):</i>	4.6
4.3.1.7	<i>National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (Act 57 of 2003):</i>	4.7
4.3.1.8	<i>Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (Act 43 of 1983):</i>	4.8
4.3.1.9	<i>Other Applicable National Legislation:</i>	4.8
4.3.2	Provincial and Local Legislation	4.8
4.3.2.1	<i>Cape Nature and Environmental Conservation Ordinance (19 of 1974):</i>	4.8
4.3.2.2	<i>Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Act (Act 9 of 2003):</i>	4.9
4.3.2.3	<i>Other Applicable Provincial and Local Legislation:</i>	4.9
4.3.3	Policies and Guidelines	4.9
4.4	OVERVIEW OF THE SCOPING AND EIA PROCESS	4.10
4.4.1	Principles for Scoping and Public Participation	4.11
4.4.2	Authority Consultation	4.12
4.4.3	Database Development, Maintenance and Ongoing Information Sharing	4.13
4.5	PRE-APPLICATION SCOPING PHASE	4.14
4.5.1	Project Announcement and Registration of I&APs	4.14
4.5.2	Draft Consultation Scoping Report Review (CURRENT STAGE)	4.15
4.6	APPLICATION AND SCOPING PHASE	4.15
4.6.1	Submission of Application Form for Environmental Authorisation to DEDEAT	4.15
4.6.2	Consultation Scoping Report Review	4.15
4.6.3	Submit Final Scoping Report to DEDEAT	4.16
4.7	SCOPING AND IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES	4.16
4.8	CONCLUDING REMARKS	4.19
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES</b>		<b>5.1</b>
5.1	APPROACH TO THE ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES	5.1
5.2	NO-GO ALTERNATIVE	5.2
5.3	PROPERTY/ LOCATION ALTERNATIVES	5.3
5.3.1	Reasoning/ motivation for the elimination of an alternative	5.3
5.4	LAND USE/ ACTIVITY ALTERNATIVES	5.4
5.4.1	Grazing (not preferred)	5.4
5.4.2	Crop Cultivation and Citrus Orchard Establishment (preferred)	5.5
5.5	LAYOUT ALTERNATIVES	5.6
5.6	CONCLUDING REMARKS	5.7
<b>CHAPTER SIX: PLAN OF STUDY FOR EIA</b>		<b>6.1</b>
6.1	INTRODUCTION	6.1
6.2	OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH TO THIS EIA	6.2
6.2.1	The NEMA EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended)	6.3
6.3	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT AND EMPr	6.3
6.3.1	Public Participation Process	6.3
6.3.1.1	<i>Compile Draft EIA Report and EMPr</i>	6.4
6.3.1.2	<i>Review of Draft EIA and EMPr, as well as Ongoing Communication</i>	6.4
6.3.1.3	<i>Comments and Responses Trial</i>	6.4
6.3.1.4	<i>Compilation of the Final EIA and EMPr, as well as Submission to Authorities</i>	6.4
6.3.1.5	<i>Decision on Application and Appeal Period</i>	6.5
6.3.1.6	<i>Authority Consultation during the EIA Phase</i>	6.5
6.3.2	Generic Terms of Reference for the Assessment of Impacts	6.6
6.3.3	Specific Aspects to be Addressed in Specialist Studies	6.9
6.3.3.1	<i>Ecological Specialist Assessment</i>	6.10
6.3.3.2	<i>Phase 1 Paleontological Impact Assessment</i>	6.11
6.3.3.3	<i>Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment</i>	6.11
6.3.3.4	<i>Soil Suitability Assessment</i>	6.11

6.3.3.5	<i>Traffic Impact Statement</i>	6.12
6.3.4	Technical Input	6.12
6.3.4.1	<i>Irrigation Water Requirement and Planting Plan</i>	6.12
6.3.4.2	<i>Roads and Wet Services</i>	6.12
6.3.5	Proposed Scheduling of EIA Phase	6.12

<b>MAPS</b>		
Map 1.1	The location of Portion 525, in relation to the nearest town, Kirkwood, Sundays River Valley Municipality.	1.2
Map 2.1	A plan indicating the coordinates of the boundary of Portion 525 of Farm Strathsomers Estate No. 42, known as Umgcambo, upon which the agricultural development is proposed to take place.	2.3
Map 2.2	A plan indicating the coordinates of the pipeline corridor originating on Portion 523 of Farm Strathsomers Estate No. 42.	2.3
Map 2.3	Draft layout of the proposed logistical services area. The preferred location and footprint will be confirmed through the assessment process.	2.5
Map 3.1	The location of Portion 525 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate (Umgcambo), including the proposed irrigation pipe (light blue) on Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, in relation to the nearest town, rivers and roads.	3.3
Map 3.2	Properties (red outline) surrounding and adjacent to Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate (yellow outline).	3.5
Map 3.3	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, as described by the National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas (NFEPA) mapping resources.	3.7
Map 3.4	Portion 525 (Umgcambo, red outline) and Portion 523 (yellow outline) of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, in terms of the ECBCP Aquatic CBA mapping resources.	3.8
Map 3.5	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, as mapped in the NBA mapping resources, showing the vegetation type on site.	3.9
Map 3.6	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, as mapped in the STEP mapping resources, showing the vegetation type on site.	3.10
Map 3.7	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate are not situated within a Biodiversity Corridor (purple) and do not fall within a Protected Area (green), as identified in the STEP mapping resources.	3.11
Map 3.8	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, in terms of the ECBCP Terrestrial CBA mapping resources.	3.12
Map 3.9	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, as mapped in the SRVM Biodiversity Sector Plan mapping resources.	3.13
Map 3.10	Fossil Sensitivity on Portion 525 (Umgcambo) and Portion 523 of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, as given by the SAHRA mapping software.	3.18
Map 3.11	Contour map (20m contour intervals) showing topography of Portion 525 (Umgcambo) of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate (red outline).	3.19
Map 3.12	Portion 525 (Umgcambo) of Farm No. 42 Strathsomers Estate, showing the Agricultural Land Capability of the site (AGIS, 2007, www.agis.agric.za).	3.20
<b>PHOTOS</b>		
Photo 2.1	Example of crates being packed within the orchards during harvest season.	2.5
Photo 2.2	Example of internal service roads on an existing citrus farm in the Sundays River Valley.	2.8
Photo 2.3	Existing outlet connection point at the dam on Portion 523.	2.8
Photo 3.1	Looking towards the eastern boundary of Umgcambo, showing a highly degraded vegetation state, with signs of previous domestic livestock grazing and browsing.	3.15
Photo 3.2	Looking towards the northern boundary of Umgcambo (red line), from Portion 523, upon which the irrigation pipe is proposed to be installed. Showing existing citrus orchards on Portion 523, as well as the mostly intact Sundays Spekboom Thicket vegetation on the northern hilled areas of Umgcambo.	3.15
Photo 3.3	The irrigation pipe proposed to be installed on Portion 523 at the existing dam outlet pipe (yellow circle) and in the road along the existing citrus orchards, towards the DR01976 road (red line).	3.16

Photo 3.4	Example of irreversibly modified vegetation cover in the road reserve of the DR01976, where the irrigation pipe is proposed to be installed under and across the road from Portion 523 to Umgcambo.	3.16
<b>TABLES</b>		
Table 1.1	EIA Team and Specialists.	1.7
Table 1.2	Summary of where requirements for a Scoping Report (in terms of GN R326, Section 2 in Appendix 2 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, (as amended)) are provided for in this report.	1.10
Table 2.1	Project cadastral information.	2.2
Table 2.2	Proposed project schedule.	2.11
Table 3.1	Activities on the properties surrounding and adjacent to the area under assessment.	3.4
Table 4.1	Listed activities according to GN R327, 325 and 324 requiring Environmental Authorisation in terms of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended).	4.2
Table 4.2	Comments and Responses Trail.	4.18
Table 6.1	Proposed list of specialist studies and specialists.	6.2
Table 6.2	Authority consultation schedule.	6.6
Table 6.3	Rating of impacts.	6.9
Table 6.4	Proposed EIA schedule.	6.13
<b>FIGURES</b>		
Figure 1.1	Extract from the National Development Plan (2030; Page 219).	1.5
Figure 3.1	Breakdown of the Employment Sector for the Sundays River Valley Municipality (Final SRVM IDP 2015/ 2016).	3.21

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	Project EAP CV
APPENDIX B	Correspondence with DEDEAT
APPENDIX C	Site Notice Boards and Newspaper Advertisement
APPENDIX D	Project Databases
APPENDIX E	Correspondence to I&APs
APPENDIX F	Correspondence from I&APs
APPENDIX G	Supporting Documentation
APPENDIX H	Locality Map

## ABBREVIATIONS

CARA	Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act
CBA	Critical Biodiversity Area
CSR	Consultation Scoping Report
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DEA	National Department of Environmental Affairs
DEDEAT	Provincial Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
EA	Environmental Authorisation
ECBCP	Eastern Cape Biodiversity Conservation Plan
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS	Ecological Importance and Sensitivity
EMPr	Environmental Management Programme
ESA	Ecologically Sensitive Area
FEPAs	Freshwater Ecosystems Priority Areas
FSR	Final Scoping Report
I&AP	Interested and Affected Party
LSRWUA	Lower Sundays River Water Users Association
NBA	Nation Biodiversity Assessment (2011)
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998), as amended
NEMAA	National Environmental Management Amendment Act (Act 107 of 1998)
NFEPA	National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas
NHRA	National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)
NMBM	Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

NPAES	National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy
PES	Present Ecological State
PoS	Plan of Study
SABIF	South African Biodiversity Information Facility
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
STEP	Subtropical Thicket Ecosystem Project
S24G	Section 24G Assessment
ToR	Terms of Reference