

MEDIA RELEASE

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Major Report on South Africa's Technical Readiness for the Shale Gas Industry Released

A major report on what needs to be done to ensure that South Africa is technically ready to support a shale gas industry in the Karoo in South Africa was released today.

The consensus report titled *South Africa's Technical Readiness to Support the Shale Gas Industry* was produced by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), in collaboration with the South African Academy of Engineering (SAAE). The report details the interventions that are required.

The study was commissioned by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in 2014 and assesses current available information and technologies in the country should shale gas exploitation be implemented to counter energy challenges. The report was considered by Cabinet on 28 September 2016.

The report concludes that much needs to be done to put in place a clear legislative environment and a rigorous regulatory and monitoring structure which will ensure that operators, in using their exploration and production licences, apply best-practice technologies that are fully compliant with the rules and regulations governing the industry. It states that decision-making processes on whether or not to proceed with the development of a shale gas industry must be based on robust and peer-reviewed evidence.

Recommendations in the report highlight the need for several baseline studies with a view to improving the current understanding of the extent of the shale gas resources and the status of the local environment in which such developments will take place.

A key recommendation is that relevant departments, with DST oversight, should initiate a major project to undertake, prior to the commencement of shale gas exploration/exploitation, robust multidisciplinary, regional and local baseline studies.

A major priority for the technical readiness of South Africa to implement a shale gas industry is the need to establish processes to continuously and accurately monitor key factors which will impact on the sustainability of the industry.

Another requirement is that interventions are made to ensure that the requisite skills and infrastructure required to implement such an industry are available.

The Hydraulic Fracturing Monitoring Committee is encouraged to take immediate steps to establish a new, or strengthen an existing, government agency whose overall function is, *inter alia*, to enable and facilitate the development of the shale gas industry in South Africa.

Assessment of the economic implications of shale gas development for South Africa must be undertaken to critically assess the supply-demand situation, and comprehensive public consultation and engagement processes with local communities in the Karoo are emphasised.

Of major importance to South Africa's groundbreaking scientific endeavours on the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project, the report recommends that any legislation that is introduced to have oversight of the shale gas industry must be fully aligned with the Astronomy Geographic Advantage Act, and that no hydraulic fracturing should take place within a 30 km buffer zone of an SKA site.



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NOTE TO EDITORS:

The report *South Africa's Technical Readiness to Support the Shale Gas Industry* is embargoed until 12 October 2016 at 14:00.

The full report will be available on www.assaf.org.za on 12 October 2016.

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Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) celebrates its 20th year as official academy of South Africa this year.

ASSAf was inaugurated in May 1996. It was formed in response to the need for an Academy of Science consonant with the dawn of democracy in South Africa: activist in its mission of using science and scholarship for the benefit of society, with a mandate encompassing all scholarly disciplines that use an open-minded and evidence-based approach to build knowledge.

ASSAf thus adopted in its name the term 'science' in the singular as reflecting a common way of enquiring rather than an aggregation of different disciplines. Its Members are elected on the basis of a combination of two principal criteria, academic excellence and significant contributions to society.

The Parliament of South Africa passed the Academy of Science of South Africa Act (Act 67 of 2001), which came into force on 15 May 2002. This made ASSAf the only academy of science in South Africa officially recognised by government and representing the country in the international community of science academies and elsewhere.

For more on the [history of ASSAf](#)

Academy of Science of South Africa

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