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Petrobras pilots GTL project for Tupi

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Petrobras has set up a pilot project with a British company aiming to use compact gas-to-liquids technology on extended well tests on pre-salt finds in the Santos basin.

The pilot, in partnership with Oxfordshire-based CompactGTL, is taking place at Petrobras' Atalaia research base, in north-eastern Brazil, and the intention is to install the GTL system on an anchored floating, production, storage and offloading vessel recently contracted from Norway's BW Offshore.

"The GTL technology will not be ready for the first extended well test on the Tupi field, but we have asked for a space to be left on board for application for GTL or gas compression technology on future well tests of this kind," said Jose Miranda Formigli, executive manager for pre-salt projects with the state-controlled company.

The first EWT is expected to start on Tupi as early as March 2009 and will test reservoir behaviour on two locations from the same well and from a third location on a second well.

The FPSO will have oil processing capacity for up to 40,000 bpd.

Objectives include testing stimulation techniques and well geometrics, with a view for preparing for a full-scale production system on a field estimated at 5 billion to 8 billion barrels in size.

In addition to the pilot GTL project, Petrobras is currently screening three companies offering offshore compression technologies.

Pending successful installation of the offshore GTL system, Petrobras will be forced to flare the gas during the first extended well tests, Formigli acknowledged.

Over the longer term, Petrobras is studying the prospects of using offshore liquefaction technology in the full-scale production system and is screening another three companies offering this technology.

Petrobras is expecting to perform continuous EWT work on its pre-salt finds in the Santos basin, and has also ordered a dynamically positioned FPSO for this purpose from Brazilian contractor Petroserv.

"We are currently finalising the specifications to order yet another dynamically positioned FPSO, called PIPA 3," Formigli said.

Petrobras still has Frontier Drilling's Seilean FPSO under contract, so is moving toward a position where it may have four small FPSO units for EWT work.