8. AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL

Agricultural practices within the study area include the following:

8.1. Irrigation Land

Several cultivated lands on commercial farms along the Sundays, Little Fish and Great Fish rivers have been identified. Irrigation methods in these areas may include centre pivot operations.

8.2. Natural Rangeland

Agricultural production from natural rangeland in the region has changed significantly in the past 10 years, resulting in important changes in land-use. Many commercial farmers in the succulent thicket originally focussed their efforts on goat (Angora and Boer) and ostrich farming. Changes in the mohair and ostrich markets have affected their margins, and there has been a dramatic change to game farming in the succulent thicket.

8.3. Grazing Land

Where agricultural practices have not been altered on rangelands occurring within the study area, grazing activities are still undertaken.

8.4. Citrus Farming

Citrus farming has been identified as the major agricultural activity which is currently being actively undertaken in the area surrounding Addo, and within the Sundays River Valley.

8.5. Potential Impacts

As the agricultural potential within the study area is fairly uniform, potential impacts associated with the construction and operation of the proposed Transmission line between the Poseidon Substation and the Grassridge Substation will not substantially differ between corridor 1 and 2.

8.5.1. Irrigation Land

The proposed Transmission line may potentially impact on several cultivated lands on commercial farms along the Sundays, Little Fish and Great Fish rivers.

- *Mitigation*

  Where these lands are part of centre pivot operations, special arrangements for the siting of towers will be required to be made during final negotiations of the route alignment. It is recommended that the negotiation on the location of towers be carried out in careful co-operation with commercial landowners.

Table 8.1: Potential impacts of the proposed Transmission line on irrigation lands

Extent	Duration	Intensity or Magnitude	Probability	Significance Without Mitigation	Significance With Mitigation
Localised	Long-term	High	Probable	High	Low

8.5.2. Natural Rangeland

Potential impacts associated with the proposed Transmission line in areas where commercial agriculture has changed to game farming include mainly those associated with aesthetics.

- *Mitigation:*

  Visual impacts associated with a new Transmission line could be ameliorated through the construction of these new lines such that they follow existing development corridors (e.g. existing Transmission line infrastructure, road or rail routes).

Table 8.2: Potential impacts of the proposed Transmission line on natural rangelands

Extent	Duration	Intensity or Magnitude	Probability	Significance Without Mitigation	Significance With Mitigation
Localised	Long-term	High	Probable	High	Moderate

8.5.3. Grazing Land

No impacts are anticipated where the new Transmission line crosses grazing land, as grazing remains viable under the overhead lines.

8.5.4. Citrus Farming

Windbreaks (i.e. a row of trees planted with the aim of reducing wind exposure of citrus orchards) are used extensively by the citrus farmers within the study area. As the operation and reliability of a Transmission line can be adversely affected by trees and shrubs interfering with the line, the height of trees below overhead lines is restricted. As the height of the windbreak determines the size of the orchard protected, a reduction in the height of the windbreaks reduces their effectiveness and can have an impact on the success of these orchards. Therefore, the construction of a new Transmission line across citrus farms could result in the limitation of the height of trees planted for windbreaking purposes, should these be in the path of the proposed line. This will impact significantly on the productivity of the citrus farm. Eskom are aware of this impact, which can actively be addressed during negotiations for final line placement.

8.6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Impacts on agricultural lands will be similar for both corridors considered:

- Impacts on rangelands will be mainly with regards to aesthetics.
- As grazing can still occur under the Transmission line after construction, no impact is anticipated on grazing lands.
- The potential impacts on irrigated lands and citrus orchards are potentially highly significant, depending on the final line placement.

Although a Transmission line is a linear development, it does not result in the sterilisation of all the land within the servitude, and thus certain agricultural practices are possible within the servitude area. Therefore, it is anticipated that the impact on agricultural potential within the study area as a result of the construction of the Transmission line will not be highly significant.

Potential impacts can be mitigated and managed through consultation with landowners prior to final placement of the Transmission line. Appropriate management measures should be detailed within an Environmental Management Plan for construction, operation and maintenance of the Transmission line.