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Seminar reviews feed manufacturing

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A recently held workshop and seminar, ExtrAfrica 2011, organised by the North-West University (NWU) in South Africa looked at extrusion technology, a food and feed processing process ideal to establish small to medium-sized processing plants on farms or in rural areas.



ExtrAfrica

"Extrusion technology, used as a cooking process, is particularly suitable for Africa as it is a relatively inexpensive, energy-efficient and an easily operated method to produce a wide range of animal feeds and



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ready-to-eat food products. It is also environmentally-friendly as it produces minimal waste products," said Prof LJ Grobler, head of the Centre of Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing (CoE) at the NWU.

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Prof Herman van Schalkwyk, agricultural economist and Potchefstroom Campus rector at the NWU, said that the agro-industries (industries that convert raw agricultural produce into consumable products) contribute about 37% of the Gross Domestic Produce (GDP) and are recognised as one of the major sectors contributing to economic growth. "One quarter of this contribution comes from agro-industrial processing. The agriculture and agro-processing sectors (especially foods, clothing, leather and leather products) tend to create more low-skilled jobs, which is so desperately needed in South Africa."

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He added that employment generators in the economy are found in manufacturing sectors such as tobacco products, oils and fats, basic chemicals, meat products, animal feeds, other foods, dairy products, grain milling, sugar products and paper products and canning. "The vital role of the agricultural and agro-processing industry sector clearly indicates that agricultural investment is necessary for industrial, urban and regional development. This will achieve food security, create jobs for all, generate and redistribute income and improve the quality of life of all South Africans."

Extrusion part of poverty plan

One of the ways in which value can be added to farm produce, is extrusion. In South Africa, job creation and poverty alleviation is one of government's major focus areas and this technology can support these objectives. The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) is one of government's bodies seeking people with a drive and vision to start agro-processing plants who are in need of

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funding. It is evident that government has a willingness to support such job generating industries. According to Loni Mametela, regional manager at the IDC in Limpopo and also one of the speakers, a main focus of the IDC is on assisting agro-processing plants especially in the rural or poor areas.

Nomfuneko Majaja, chief director of Advanced Manufacturing at the dti and a speaker, said that agro-processing plants can help communities to become involved in manufacturing and reap the benefits of technology. Only a single computer-controlled machine is needed to start a plant. Majaja further said that seminar was a good interaction initiative to show the possibilities of extrusion.

The seminar offered delegates networking opportunities with other role players and also gave new ideas in terms of technology that can add value, how to obtain financing and the practical aspects of starting food manufacturing plants.

Future events

One-day practical seminars on extrusion are planned in different provinces between October and November 2011 and February to April 2012. The first seminar will take place at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) on 5 October 2011. (This coincides with CPUT's Food Innovation Symposium planned for the 4th of October 2011.)

The ExtrAfrica 2012 conference is already in the planning phase for 30 July to 3 August 2012 at the Protea Hotel Kruger Gate, Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

For more information, go to www.extrfrica.org.za.

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