

The new equipment for Soroti fruit factory being offloaded at the factory site on Friday. Photo by Emmanuel Alomu

Soroti fruit factory set to start

EQUIPMENT

The second consignment was delivered to the site in Arapai sub-county last week

By Emmanuel Alomu

Construction of a multi-million fruit processing factory in Soroti district is now complete and the facility is due to start operations.

The first batch of equipment for the processing plant was imported from Italy in May this year and the second consignment was delivered to the site in Arapai sub-county last week.

President Yoweri Museveni launched the fruit-processing factory in 2014 as one of the enterprises envisaged to boost employment and create market for fruits cultivated by Teso farmers.

The factory will be developed under a public-private-partnership. The Government will own 40%, South Korea 20% and the people of Teso 40%.

The Government contributed $2.2m towards the infrastructure development such as roads, electricity, piped water, waste management and land.

South Korea provided $7.4m towards the equipment, specialised machinery and training of Ugandans, who will be directly employed by the factory.

EMPLOYMENT

The factory will employ 40 technical staff and 500 support staff when it starts operations

The factory is expected to refine 120 tonnes of fruits per day, providing relief to farmers in the eastern region who grow a lot of fruits, but lose most of the harvest to wastage.

Many farmers in Teso sub-region have been selling oranges and mangoes at a low price due to lack of a ready market.

Plenty of raw materials

Uganda is one of the biggest African producer of organic fruits and has abundant potential to produce mangoes, citrus fruits, pineapples, tomatoes and a host of other vegetables. Despite this great production potential, the processing of fruits and vegetables is low and is mainly limited to extraction of juice, drying, bottling and labelling.

Teso region is the leading producer of citrus fruits in the country. It has approximately three million fruit trees with a potential production of 600,000 metric tonnes of fruit per year.

Situated in Arapai sub-county in Soroti district on Moroto Road, the factory is in line with Museveni's agro-processing economic trajectory for the country.

So far, the Government has completed the works on the road, water tank, perimeter wall, drilling of a production well and the fencing of the transformer.

Last consignment

Ronald Kigongo Akankwansa, the manager production and technical services at the factory, said the third and last consignment of 12 containers of the factory equipment will arrive in August.

David Baziwane, a senior project officer at the Uganda Development Co-operation (UDC), revealed that the factory will employ 40 technical staff and 500 support staff when it starts operations.

In 2012, the government of Korea through their development arm, Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) offered to facilitate the establishment of the fruit factory.

The Government signed a memorandum of understanding with South Korea for the project that involved construction, extension of water and power to the project site, paving of the neighbouring roads, fencing of the project site and provision of land for waste disposal, covering a radius of 10km.

The contract for the construction of the fruit factory was awarded to Hwanshin Uganda Limited for a period of 15 months commencing March 26, 2015 to May 2016.

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