

Motorcycle assembly to start in Rwanda

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A new factory is set to start assembling motorcycles at Kigali Special Economic Zone, a move expected to reduce the cost of motorcycles in the country.



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The factory, Rwanda Motorcycle Company (RMC), is expected to start assembling the motorcycles this month. Motorcycles are a common means of transport in Rwanda and are efficient and cost effective.

The initial investment in the assembling plant is \$1.2 million but more is expected to be invested as the production grows, according to officials.

According to McPhee Christopher, the company director, the goal is to promote 'Made in Rwanda' products by engaging local steel companies and other manufacturing companies to supply materials.

In an interview last week, Christopher said that all is set for them to start assembling motorcycles of different brands in the next two weeks.

First target

"Our first target is taxi-motos which will be the largest volume, we will also target government officials and non-government organisations," he said, noting that some of their motorcycles are good for traffic patrol.

Containers with parts from various factories in China that will be assembled are currently in Tanzania awaiting clearance to be transported to Rwanda, according to Christopher.

The factory is owned by a USA investor.

Christopher said that the company was attracted by the political will to ease foreign investment and the wider market in the country.

The motorcycles will be sold in Kigali and were specially designed and tested to suit Rwandan roads, sale after-market parts, and mechanical services, he said.

Prime market

"We thought the market was prime, we can offer a better product for the country. We have various parts and a reliable engine and the price is going to be lower than those already on the market because we are producing them here," he added.

The initial production capacity will be 130 motorcycles per month but with plans to expand in six months to produce the same quantity (130 motorcycles) per week, according to Christopher.

"This is not something everyone can do, it is done in China and in other developed countries and we want to bring it here, we will hire competent mechanical technicians," he said.

The company hopes to create jobs for over 100 local technicians, with a target to sell to locals after five years through employees' buyout system. The cost of the motorcycles ranges from Rwf1.2 million to Rwf3 million, according to Louis Masengesho, the factory marketing manager.

Boosting 'Made in Rwanda'

According to Christopher, there are plans to forge partnerships with local factories so that they start using their metal products instead of importing them.

"We are hoping to partner with other factories so that we can get materials which are locally made such as hand bars and some other pieces. For instance, we can have bars bent here and if we can do all the tube pieces, plastic pieces and painting, this will be a big portion of the motorcycles," he noted.

Jean d'Amour Nshimiyimana, an employee of the company and student from the Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centre (IPRC) Kigali, said the factory will not only help them get jobs but also acquire advanced mechanical skills.

"We hope we will learn from experienced technicians and we will be able to make locally made products which will be part of pieces to be assembled. This company is not here only to help us earn money but it is another school," he said.

There are seven motorcycle brands all given Kinyarwanda names that define their strengths such as Ingenzi, Indakangwa, Indahigwa, Imparage, Ifarasi and Inzovu.