

Beefmaster Group pumps R30m into Kimberley plant upgrades

South African beef company, Beefmaster Group, is investing more than R30m into equipment upgrades at its production plant in Kimberley. The upgrades will enable the company to scale up production and create approximately 30 new jobs.



Credit: Beefmaster Group

According to group CEO Louw van Reenen, the purpose of the upgrades is to ensure that the company has the capacity to service the needs of a growing beef market. This is despite the onset of Covid-19, which continues to threaten the viability of many businesses and the job security of employees in the Kimberley area and elsewhere.

“Our focus is on guaranteeing the sustainability of our operation and safeguarding our employees’ future,” says Van Reenen.

“Although we were lucky enough to be classed as an essential service, at the height of the lockdown restrictions we made the conscious decision to focus on the health and wellbeing of our people, our number one asset,” says Van Reenen. “Instead of pulling back on investing in our people and our operations at this time, we are full steam ahead in implementing our plans to upgrade so that we are ready to deliver when the economy turns around.”

With a 664-strong staff complement, Beefmaster Group claims to be Kimberley’s largest private employer.

Sourcing equipment locally

The upgrades, which have been in the pipeline since 2017, include the installation of a biomass boiler at its meat processing facility as well as a multi-staged vacuum machine.

The boiler, which creates steam energy, will allow the plant to reduce its reliance on water and electricity as key resources and therefore help it become more energy efficient. The eight-tonne boiler is currently being installed and will be in full operation by mid-December 2020.

Van Reenen says that the company sourced the boiler from a local manufacturer renowned for exceptional technology and engineering. "It was important to us to use local manufacturers and partners in as far as was possible in our upgrades, given the positive contribution they make to the economy," Van Reenen says.



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He adds that the multi-stage vacuum machine, which looks like an octopus with chambers, works at tremendous speed and will therefore increase efficiencies, as well as capacity, in the deboning department.

"Although this is essentially a robotic function, we have been careful not to replace human capacity, that is, any of our valued people, with the installation of the machine. The machine will in fact create more capacity for additional people to cut the meat products and package them appropriately on the conveyer system, adding approximately 30 jobs," explains Van Reenen.

The installation of the multi-stage vacuum machine is being rolled out in two phases, with the second phase to be completed by early 2021.

Furthermore, the Group has upgraded the configuration of its Kimberley premises to increase training capacity and upskill more of its own people. In the last year, Beefmaster Group has spent close to R400,000 on staff training and between 2017 and 2020, 194 employees benefitted from promotions at the company.

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