

SAEOPA hosts oil conference to facilitate quality exports

Press release by the South African Essential Oils Producers' Association

The Department of Trade and Industry (dti), Switzerland through the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the South African Essential Oils Producers' Association (SAEOPA) recently hosted the first South African conference on essential and vegetable oils to facilitate quality exports.

The conference falls within the framework of the UNIDO-SECO Global Quality and Standards Programme country project in South Africa (GQSP-SA), which aims to improve the quality of South African essential and vegetable oil products by addressing quality and standards compliance capacity challenges.

Experts weigh in

The conference theme, 'Industry milestones, sharing successes and demystifying market requirements', was deliberated by renowned oil and quality infrastructure experts from South Africa, Australia, Europe and Turkey.

The event brought together more than 150 oil producers from all over South Africa and Southern Africa, and armed them with information pertaining to current burning

issues, particularly successful entry into the global marketplace.

Demand for quality on the rise

The demand for both essential oils and vegetable oils is escalating worldwide, which creates an opportunity for South Africa, with its diversity of climate and soil types, to excel and prove itself a worthy contender in exporting both essential and vegetable oils for world consumption.

"The growth in this sector will stimulate increased production of vegetable and essential oils, improved packaging, knowledge of regulatory requirements and internationally recognised testing facilities, understanding of market and export requirements, better pricing and distribution. But in order to compete, this industry must become quality-driven," says Claudy Steyn, chief director: chemicals, cosmetics, plastics and pharmaceuticals at the dti.

Mobilising the sector's potential

According to Nonhlanhla Halimana, programme manager at SECO, the conference represented the commitment from the industry and the South African government to join forces to mobilise the potential of the sector.

The event was structured to answer the most daunting questions that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may have when trying to access markets and provide realistic solutions and success stories.

"We believe in guiding, coaching and mentoring SMEs to embed quality at each stage of the value chain. This is the most practical approach and will allow SMEs considering export to produce quality products, which will build the international image of South African oil products," says Elsie Meintjies, UNIDO's chief technical advisor.

A unique opportunity

SAEOPA expressed its gratitude to the GQSP-SA for its support in organising this standard-setting conference and building the association's capacity to conduct future events for its members and the industry.

"The conference provided a unique opportunity for Southern African oil producers to learn from those who have already succeeded in accessing international markets. It also highlighted the value of quality and the technical infrastructure available in South Africa," says Karen Swanepoel of SAEOPA.

The public-private dialogue facilitated by the conference will assist in the utilisation of available public services and the development of demand-driven services required by the private sector, ensuring the sustainable and efficient use of the available capacity.

"This will be an important platform in the future to sustainably integrate SMEs into global markets and, moreover, for the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda," says Juan Pablo Davila, industrial development officer at UNIDO. 🌱



Delegates and speakers at the SAEOPA conference.

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