

Citrus expansion in Botswana could supply proposed Schweppes processing plant

Selebi-Phikwe Citrus is considering a supply relationship with Schweppes as both companies pursue agricultural developments around Dikgatlhong in Botswana.

According to the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre's (BITC) investment pipeline, consultations are underway to allocate approximately 800 hectares of land held by Lesabokwe Trust to Schweppes for a proposed agro-processing operation. Lesabokwe Trust represents Robelela, Tshokwe, and surrounding communities.

Selebi-Phikwe Citrus is separately negotiating with the trust for about 1,300 hectares to expand its orchards. The developments could provide Schweppes with locally grown citrus while creating an additional industrial market for fruit from Selebi-Phikwe Citrus.

Details including purchasing volumes, prices, specifications, and the duration of any supply agreement have not been disclosed. A formal offtake agreement between the companies has also not been made public.

Selebi-Phikwe Citrus currently operates a 1,840-hectare farm east of Selebi-Phikwe on land owned by the Mmadinare Multipurpose Cooperative Society. The operation grows navel and Valencia oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and mandarins for domestic and export markets.

The company recently announced plans to invest a further P500 million (US\$36.7 million) to expand its acreage and growing capacity. Chief executive officer Pieter Scholtz said the expansion is expected to create 1,500 jobs.

"This next phase will see an additional P500 million investment, and we expect it to create 1,500 new jobs," he said.

BITC chief executive officer Keletsositse Olebile identified the Selebi-Phikwe Citrus expansion as one of the projects in the agency's investment pipeline. BITC is facilitating agricultural and agro-processing investments around Dikgatlhong Dam.

The proposed Schweppes facility would add processing capacity and another purchasing channel to the area's citrus sector. Both projects remain subject to land negotiations and regulatory approvals.

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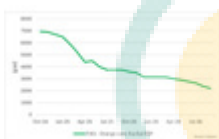
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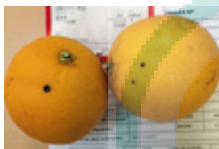
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