

CROPS

Mozambican coconut industry to receive a boost

Mozambique's coconut industry is set to receive a R37 million boost.

Agri-Vie has announced a joint venture with Vida Oils International to process coconuts into specialist oils and fats for the food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic and chemical sectors in South Africa.

The procurement and processing strategy is aimed at providing a route to market for less developed African countries. The project will initially make use of small-scale growers in Mozambique, who tend to lose most of their crop to waste.

Through this venture, Vida Oils is set to increase the output of coconut oil up to fourfold within the next three to five years.

Mozambique's coconut oil production has been steady on some 30 000t per year since 2007. Between 2002 and 2006 production stood at around 25 000t per year.

"This is an untapped market," said Avril Stassen, partner at Agri-Vie.

"Only a very small portion of the coconuts produced in Mozambique are converted to value-added products. Most of the final product will be sold on the South African market to replace imported lauric oils."

Deon Coetzee, CEO of Vida Oils International, said there was significant potential to develop the market for coconut oil.

"There is currently a high degree of interest in the medical and health benefits of the product," he said.

Coetzee added that Vida Oils would also develop by-product markets for the small-scale growers.

This would include converting the husks and shells of the coconuts and uprooted trees into a biomass energy source, a growing medium, and environmental rehabilitation products.

– *Lindi van Rooyen*