



# KWAZULU-NATAL EXPORTER OF THE YEAR AWARDS ISEGEN



## Durban food acids plant in new R40 million expansion venture

DURBAN-based Isegen South Africa, a world-renowned manufacturer of food acidulants, has due to increased local and export demand, embarked on a R40 million expansion programme to increase production facilities at its maleic anhydride (MA) and food acids plants.

A reactor imported from Europe will produce an initial additional 7 000 tons of MA annually from butane and after a second phase expansion, this will be increased to 14 000 tons. After the start-up of this reactor, the use of benzene, which is also used to make maleic anhydride, will be phased out on the Isipingo site.

According to Isegen's managing director, Robert Fowlds, this will have long-term environmental benefits for the site and for the South Durban Basin. The butane is sourced through a pipeline from the Sapref refinery adjacent to the Isegen plant, and has led to considerable synergy and cost savings.

MA is the raw material used in the manufacture of the food acidulants, which are used to provide the sour taste or tartness in foods such as beverages, confectionary and condiments.

All the technology used in the food acids manufacturing process has been developed in-house in South Africa, and all major raw materials are of South African origin.

Way back in 1974, before establishing Isegen,

Fowlds developed the technology and became South Africa's first food acidulant manufacturer. At that time, he was one of only four global manufacturers producing malic acid. Over 65% of the production is exported to 43 countries. Once the current expansion is operational, exports will rise to 85% of production – earning the country valuable foreign exchange.

The project was truly a Durban effort, with process engineering carried out by Isegen and local engineers.

The construction phase used Durban-based contract engineering companies MCM for civil work, Innovative Industries and SHM Engineering for pipe work and structural steel, LHL Engineering for equipment fabrication and ICA for instrumentation.

A state-of-the-art Emerson Delta V process control system is being used to ensure that the highest standards of safety and operation are maintained.

The expansions were managed by operations director Paul Tack, who was ably assisted by the Isegen team of Braam Piekaar, Bennie Matthee, Charlie Noel, JC Heydenrich and Dumi Mkhize - all specialists in their field with many years experience in the chemical industry.

Fowlds attributes the success of Isegen to the knowledgeable and experienced people involved in all aspects of the business.



Pictured in front of the new imported reactor at Isegen are, from left, the company's three shareholders: Robert Fowlds, managing director; Mark Holtes, marketing director; and Paul Tack, operations director.



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SOUTH AFRICA (PTY) LTD  
Registration No.: 2002/015060/07

Isegen is the sole producer of Anhydrides and Plasticisers in Africa and is a world leader in the manufacture of food acidulants.



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