

Coast cotton ginnery to revitalise production

Factory's six processors can mint out 600kgs of lint each

by **Munira Mandano**
@PeopleDailyKe

The government seeks to replicate Base Titanium Kwale's cotton programme across the country to achieve one of its Big Four agenda pillars manufacturing.

Over the past two days, top government officials led by Trade Cabinet secretary Adan Mohamed together with representatives of 12 cooperatives are examining the Kwale cotton programme as a potential model to roll out across the country.

Central to the visit was the laying of the foundation stone for a ginnery as part of a Sh90 million business centre in Kinondo.

Base's cotton programme centres on the PAVI Cooperative which was founded in 2014 to organise and support farmer's participating in the mining company's agricultural livelihoods programmes.

The ginnery will be designed to house six gins that can process up to 1,800 kilogrammes (kgs) of cotton per day producing around 600 kg of lint each. The ginnery will process cotton from farmers in Kwale, Tana River, Lamu, Kilifi and Taita Taveta and is expected to process cotton from 10,000 farmers by 2019, allowing farmers to benefit from better returns.

The 12 cooperatives' representatives from other parts of Kenya had the opportunity to speak directly with PAVI farmers to hear first-hand the challenges and opportunities presented by growing cotton.

"The cotton project has surpassed our expectations and continues to transform the lives of farmers throughout the county. PAVI Cooperative continues to grow sustainably and supports livelihoods of more than 3,000 farmers every year," said Base Titanium environment and community affairs general manager Colin Forbes.

In addition to the ginnery, the PAVI Business Centre will host offices, stock feed manufacturing and distribution facilities, fresh produce warehouse, cold room and stores, honey processing and storage facilities and demonstration plots for new crops.

PROGRAMME

The cotton programme forms part of Base Titanium's community investment programmes that focus on livelihood development, community infrastructure, health and scholarships.

The programmes work to ensure a mutual flow of benefits between Base Titanium and local communities.



According to data from the ministry of Agriculture, Kenya has an estimated potential of more than 350,000 hectares suitable for rain-fed cotton production, with an estimated capacity to produce more than 700,000 bales of lint annually.

The potential for irrigated cotton production is a further 35,000 hectares with an estimated 200,000 bales of lint annually.

The current scenario, however, depicts a poorly performing sector with only 30,000 ha producing 20,000 bales of lint annually.

The number of cotton farmers has also dropped from 200,000 in the 1980s to the current estimated 30,000 small-scale farmers.

The infrastructure that supports the industry, including ginning machines and textile mills are operating under capacity while others have closed down.

Currently, 80 per cent of the domestic lint requirement is imported, underlining the need for Kenya to invest in a thriving cotton industry that will support other sectors including manufacturing.

Replication of the Kwale model in all the cotton-growing counties will generate more than 760,000 new jobs through the cotton value chain.

"Kenya currently exporting Sh40 billion in textile and apparel. We believe this facility will benefit the neighbouring counties and greatly improve the cotton value chain," said Trade CS Mohammed.