

Base Titanium awakens Kenya's cotton industry with Ksh90 million project

The Australian mining company is closely working with Kwale residents through the Pamba and Viazi cooperative (PAVI) to have a ginnery in place by next year to support cotton farming in the area. The national government is expected to replicate the project to other parts of the country.

by **Martin Mwita** — August 6, 2018 in Agribusiness

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KENYA, AUGUST 5, 2018 — Australian mining company-Base Titanium has partnered with local farmers in Kwale County to lead in the construction of a ginnery in the area which will be a landmark project for the revival of cotton farming in Kenya.

The ginnery will be located within a Business Park in the county, with the entire project aimed at improving farming, ginning and garment production in the country.

Base is closely working with locals through the Kwale Pamba and Viazi cooperative (PAVI) with expected support from the county and national governments to implement the ambitious US\$897, 039 (Ksh90 million) project.

According to Base Titanium, the ginnery is expected to be up and running by the first quarter of next year.

The ginnery will support the miners' cotton farming initiative launched in the area in 2014 under its community development programmes.

The project which commenced with a small number of farmers has grown consistently with 600 farmers growing cotton this season.

A relationship has also been developed with farmers in Lamu County to improve bargaining power when selling the cotton lint with Base planning to have at least 10,000 small scale farmers involved in the programme by 2020.

"Base and Pavi hope to have the ginnery built and operational by February 2019 which would allow for the current cotton crop to be processed at the site. Construction activities on site commenced in June 2018," said Colin Forbes, Base's General Manager Environment and Community Affairs.

The Kwale project has received backing from the national government where in May this year, the former Industry, Trade and Cooperatives Cabinet Secretary Adan Mohammed launched the Pavi Business Park and endorsed Base's Kwale Cotton Programme as a model to be implemented across the country in cotton growing counties.

Mohammed was recently moved to the East Africa Community docket with Peter Munya taking up the trade office in a presidential reshuffle.

The business park in which the ginnery is located will also have offices, warehouses, manufacturing and distribution facilities, storage facilities and demonstration plants among other support facilities.

"It is hoped that the Kenyan government, as part of its commitment to the Big 4 Action Plan and recognition of the role Base's Kwale Cotton Programme is playing in the revitalisation of Kenya's cotton industry, will be a partner," Forbes told The Exchange in an interview.

"Other donors, the county government and private sector funds are also being sought for the Ksh90 million investment," he added.

Pavi Cooperative was established by local farmers to manage their participation on Base's various agricultural livelihood programmes which also include poultry, coconut and sorghum farming as the miner continues to ensure that sustainable livelihood opportunities are provided to residents of Kwale County alongside its operations.

READ: [Base Titanium's livelihoods programmes changing lives in Kwale](#)

"Initial plans for the ginnery and Business Park have been developed and discussions are underway to identify and secure additional funding sources," Forbes affirmed, explaining that the project will be developed in phases focussed initially on cotton before extending to other functions.

By ginning the cotton in Kwale, the farmers will be able to achieve a better price for their produce according to PAVI and Base.

Further income opportunities have also been identified and will be accommodated by the Business Park including the production of cotton seed oil and feedstock for chicken.

Base has connected Pavi to export markets which include a direct link with Australian apparel company Cotton On who purchase the cotton directly.

Cotton from the 2014, 2015 and 2016 seasons was shipped to Bangladesh and used in the manufacture of clothing for Cotton On.

"Some cotton from the 2017 season may again be shipped to Bangladesh with the remainder sold to Kenyan customers," Forbes said.

The ginnery will feature six gins with a capacity to process up to 1,800 kilogrammes of cotton per day and capable of producing about 600 kilogrammes of lint each.

If successfully implemented, it will be a major milestone in revitalizing the country's cotton farming space which has dwindled in recent times.

Kenya has a potential to produce 700,000 bales of lint through rain-fed cotton production and close to 200,000 bales of lint through cotton grown on irrigated land annually.

However, the country only produces 20,000 bales of lint annually. The number of cotton farmers in the country has also dropped from 200,000 in the 1980s to about 30,000.

Kenya imports 80 per cent of the lint for its domestic requirement while the country's ginning machines and textile mills operate under capacity.

Replicating the Kwale ginnery in other cotton producing countries will go a long-way in reviving the industry while creating more jobs and improving the livelihood of farmers.