

KENYA MEAT COMMISSION

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A PRIME CUT

Kenya Meat Commission is determined to resume its leading position in East Africa as a producer of top quality meat cuts and processed products. Julia Smith reports



Cattle-farming has been a staple element of the Kenyan economy for decades. The livestock sub-sector accounts for about 10 per cent of the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) and employs over 50 per cent of the agricultural labour force. It makes both a direct and indirect contribution to food security and the sustainable development of the country, contributing to household income at many levels through the sale of livestock and livestock products. It also provides raw materials and by-products for agro-industries, in addition to generating foreign earnings through exports.

Although much of the country's herd, which numbers in the region of 15 million, remains in the hands of pastoralists and subsistence farmers, the domestic market is booming and becoming increasingly

professional in character. Urbanisation and the healthy appetite of the growing middle class is giving rise to a new wave of commercialisation as standards and expectations steadily rise.

However, Kenyan meat is not only prized at home. It has a fine reputation for taste and succulence which extends far beyond the country's borders, with animal cuts and related products traditionally sold as far afield as the Middle East.

Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) re-opened for business in 2006 when

the Kenyan government recognised its potential to contribute to the nation's economic development. The site belonging to KMC, which had previously been closed for a number of years following earlier privatisation initiatives, already had large-scale facilities in place that simply required upgrading. With the capacity to slaughter 1,000 head of large stock per day as well as 1,500 smaller animals, this is far in excess of any other slaughterhouse in the country. Moreover, in its earlier days, KMC had

2006

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established a clear leadership role in the region and a reputation for excellence, which, despite years of closure, the government felt could be recaptured.

It was decided that a reinvigorated KMC could play a key role in complementing government efforts to revive the livestock sector and turn Kenya into a major exporter of high-

quality beef and other livestock products. Targeted livestock development is underway throughout Kenya based on a series of strategically placed zones, which have been certified as disease-free and are subject to the strictest control of animal movements. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture is engaged in an extensive programme to build skills and knowledge in animal health, production and the quality assurance of value-added animal products.

KMC has a mandate to purchase cattle and small stock and to acquire, establish and





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Carcasses are held for five to seven days to give the most tender and juicy meat cuts

operate abattoirs, meat works, cold storage concerns and refrigeration works. The operational focus is on animal slaughter, the processing of by-products, preparing hides and chilling, freezing, canning and storing beef, mutton, poultry and other meat products. The chilling facilities have a capacity to hold 1,750 carcasses operating at temperatures of between zero to 2°C and the carcasses are held at these temperatures for five to seven days to give the most tender and juicy meat cuts.

Although most output is destined for domestic consumption, approximately 1,000 tonnes of fresh and frozen goat, lamb and beef is exported each year. Export consignments cover the whole spectrum of entire carcasses, primary cuts,

canned products and other value-added products. The focus on quality—competitors are major meat exporters such as Brazil and Australia—has enabled KMC to penetrate a diverse range of markets which already takes in several destinations in the Middle East including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. In North Africa, a foothold has been established in Sudan and Egypt and closer to home, KMC serves markets across East and Central Africa.

KMC now operates the single largest and most technically advanced export abattoir in the East, Central and Horn of Africa and the management team are proud of the exceptional attention to detail in ensuring that all

Partial list of instruments stocked and supplied on order:

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KMC buys livestock from individual livestock owners, traders, ranchers and organized livestock trading groups

“KMC IS NOW DETERMINED TO INCREASE FURTHER ITS EXPORT MARKET AND SEES SCOPE FOR MANY MORE PRODUCTS”

products are prepared in accordance with the highest international standards.

All livestock are inspected on arrival by veterinary officers and repeated inspections are carried out prior to slaughter, a process which adheres to strict halal guidelines. Animals are bled along the conveyor for approximately seven minutes before carcasses are eviscerated and then split, washed, weighed and graded. A fully-equipped in-house laboratory ensures stringent quality monitoring standards are

kept and samples of all final products are analysed for compliance before dispatch. This takes place through carefully selected logistics partners with a proven capability to maintain the vital cold chain during transit.

Both domestic and export markets offer a clear opportunity to gain further market share and the main challenge confronted by KMC is how to win back its former market leadership position. ISO 22000:2005 certification is seen as fundamental in gaining customer confidence. This is already

in place and is seen as a vital cornerstone in the battle to regain market leadership.

“This ISO certification will give the Commission a competitive edge that will ensure greater market reach both locally and internationally,” stated Dr Mohamed Abdi Kuti, minister for Livestock Development, adding that it would augment KMC’s role in providing a market to the livestock industry which will give a major boost to the economic dynamics of the country’s pastoral communities.

Looking to the future, KMC is now determined to increase further its export market and sees scope for many more products, particularly in the value-added category: a team of food scientists and technicians are at work on an innovative range

of processed chicken and camel products. A number of opportunities have been identified for canned corned beef and production is expected to increase dramatically in 2012 when a new one-acre beef chilling facility will also become operational.

Most importantly of all, KMC’s achievements are radiating out to the wider Kenyan economy. Government officials have repeatedly praised the operational efficiency of the plant and are delighted at the contribution it is making towards Kenya’s development efforts. **BE**

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