

Africa's Big 7 strategic to sustainable development

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Africa's Big 7 is the only expo of its kind in Africa. It is a major clearing house where fresh and processed foods are on exhibit for export. The exhibition, which takes place at Gallagher Estates, is a platform from where speciality foods and beverages are marketed to Africa's importers, wholesalers and retailers, and where manufacturing processes and packaging technologies are traded internationally.

The exhibition is organised by Exhibition Management Services, possibly the longest established exhibitions organiser in Africa operating under its original brand since the late seventies, and active all over the continent. Says Managing Director John Thomson: "Since we started the business we have recorded many successes for specialised events, notably with exhibitions for food in Mauritius, telecommunications and power generation in Nigeria, mining and power in Ghana, and technologies for oil production in Cape Town. The Big 7 show has evolved into a major success story for our company as well as for our infrastructure supplier, Oasys Innovations."

Thomson says that, from a humble meat show in the early eighties, a period when meat prices were held constant for at least five years, the show has grown into new dimensions including bakeries, dairies, delicatessen and other fresh produce. Considering the international debate on the dimensions of the food crisis, the annual exhibition is of strategic importance for the continent. The collective initiative of seven co-located events, including the Pan Africa Retail Trade Exhibition, Retail Solutions Africa, FoodBiz Africa, Agri-Food, FoodTech Africa, Interbake Africa and Dairy/Deli, will further create an environment in which solutions can be tabled for world markets.

"International participation comes from as far afield as India, the United States, China, Turkey and ten African countries," says Thomson. "We are sure that, due to the international attention on food production, the number of visitors will exceed the 6700 from 40 countries last year."

Brian Kennedy, Chief Executive for Oasys Innovations who will be supplying the infrastructure: "We have had an excellent partnership with EMS for many years and will be installing 2000 square meters of shell scheme packages, including the electrical connections for the infrastructure and the booths for the 235 companies that will be exhibiting. About 5000 square meters of carpeting will be fitted and numerous custom stands have been designed for companies who want to present themselves a cut above the rest. We have also found that our audio visual unit, which was launched two years ago, is filling its order book to my total satisfaction and The Big 7 will be home for a few days for some of our hi-tech equipment."

Thomson and Kennedy concur that The Big 7 exhibition has grown beyond expectations, that the food trade in international markets as was also prioritised by the G8 during their recent session in Japan, will continue to receive priority attention and that southern Africa will play an ever increasing strategic role in the supply chain in years to come.

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