

# Agni Steels starts recruiting at Coega

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The Coega Development Corporation (CDC) will manage recruitment for the first 143 jobs -- out of a possible 800 -- being created at Agni Steels SA's smelting plant in the Coega industrial development zone.

The wholly black-owned steel mill will produce mild steel billet both the domestic and export markets. It is initially recruiting office and technical staff, including laboratory technicians and heavy equipment operators.

Production for export to India and other African countries will start by June next year.

"Agni Steels has asked us to place 143 people into positions ranging from unskilled to management," Ayanda Vilakazi, CDC head of marketing and communications, said on Wednesday (12 December).

Three Port Elizabeth businessmen had partnered with one of the biggest steel manufacturers in India to set up a R400m steel plant at Coega. Agni Steels SA was started after the partners identified the need for a domestic steel producer to benefit scrap metals being exported from the country.

The plant is a joint venture between Agni Steels SA and a Nelson Mandela Bay empowerment consortium. The Industrial Development Corporation holds a 10% stake in the venture. Another 10% shareholding was reserved for a workers' trust.

"We are pleased to be at the stage where what was once a concept is now bearing fruit and will start making a real impact on people's lives," said Agni Steels SA co-director Hassan Khan.

The venture is expected to create downstream benefits for the local industry.

The government said last week it had endorsed the findings of a report by an inter-departmental task team on the iron ore and steel value chain, aimed at bringing down the cost of steel in SA.

The Cabinet had also given the green light to measures to control the export of scrap metal.

The Agni Steels SA plant at Coega would use 10,000 tons of scrap a month during the first phase of operations, doubling to 20,000 tons thereafter.

The group said it chose Coega because it apparently has a world-class infrastructure. Production will be increased in phases, by converting billets into reinforced steel bar for the domestic construction industry.

Vilakazi said 80% of job placements at Coega came from the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan area, which includes Uitenhage and Despatch.

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