



# African Pioneer in brand plan

Eastern Cape businessman Stephen Dondolo says his black-owned investment firm African Pioneer Group plans to enter the beverage market with its own brand in mind.



Stephen Dondolo. Picture: *The Herald*

The African Pioneer CEO, who this week [clinched a black empowerment deal](#) with Coca-Cola Beverages SA for a 17.5% stake in Appletiser, said the group was ambitious and was creating opportunities to expand its beverage portfolio.

"One day, once the infrastructure is in place, I will develop my own beverage brand," Dondolo said on Wednesday. "This brand will not only compete in SA, but will make a place for itself in the rest of the world as well."

African Pioneer's investment history is nothing to sneeze at. The group concluded the first major empowerment transaction with fishing company Pioneer Fishing in 1997. It is one of the three shareholders of Woodlands Dairy, the leader in boxed processed milk in SA. African Pioneer is also a majority shareholder of Caltex Eastern Cape Marketer, the largest purchaser of fuel from Chevron SA.

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Dondolo said the tie-up with Coca-Cola Beverages was a feather in the company's cap and would allow it to extend the group's brand and name.

"It really makes us feel proud to be associated with a brand such as Appletiser. There are very few local brands that are produced in SA with reach in international markets. We will be able to extend the reach of the brand of African Pioneer and Appletiser all over the world using the network of the Coca-Cola company," said Dondolo.

African Pioneer will be joined by long-serving Coca-Cola Beverages employee Sipho Madlala, who purchased a 4% stake bringing the total black empowerment to 21.5%. The transaction values were not disclosed.

The deal meets a merger condition set by the Competition Tribunal in 2016 in the creation of Coca-Cola Beverages, whose MD Velaphi Ratshefola said he was delighted to join up with the empowerment partners.

Source: *Business Day*

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