Simon Rudland opens $25 million citrus processing plant at Beitbridge

Simon Rudland has commissioned a $25 million citrus processing plant in Beitbridge, the Zimbabwean border town on the Limpopo River crossing into South Africa, through a company called Orangeville, in what ranks among the largest private industrial investments the area has seen.

Orangeville was established in Beitbridge in 2024 with an initial outlay of $20 million, and a further $5 million has since been committed. The plant holds certification to supply citrus juice to Schweppes Zimbabwe Limited and is targeting export markets across the region. The company describes the Schweppes certification as a milestone in local value addition.

The facility currently employs around 350 people, with roughly 60% on seasonal contracts tied to the citrus harvest calendar. Management projects the workforce will reach at least 1,500 within five years as a planned 5,000-hectare citrus plantation comes into production. That plantation is also intended to secure the plant's own fruit supply, addressing what company officials identify as one of the main operational problems: inconsistent deliveries from nearby growers who sell to higher-paying buyers elsewhere.

High transport costs compound that supply challenge. On water, the plant draws approximately 40% of its supply from Zhove Dam, an arrangement designed to provide resilience during what forecasters expect to be another dry season in Zimbabwe.

Beyond juice, the processing lines extract orange essential oil for the cosmetics industry and convert citrus residue into livestock feed supplements and pellets, creating a second revenue stream from what would otherwise be waste.

Albert Nguluvhe, the Matabeleland South Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, toured the facility and said the government stands ready to facilitate further investment in the province. Nguluvhe encouraged Orangeville to diversify into fodder production to support livestock farmers during dry spells, and said future investment should include a workers' clinic and a preschool.

The Beitbridge plant follows a larger investment Rudland commissioned in November, when he opened the Cut Rag Processors tobacco facility in Harare's Aspindale industrial area, a plant reported at $102 million and equipped with German and Italian machinery to process Zimbabwe's raw tobacco leaf rather than export it unprocessed. President Emmerson Mnangagwa presided over that opening.

Rudland, born in Harare in 1971, co-founded Gold Leaf Tobacco Corporation with business partner Yakub Mahomed. His interests now span manufacturing, agriculture, finance, logistics, mining and banking across Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo, employing more than 10,000 people. The South African Revenue Service obtained a preservation order in August 2022 freezing assets linked to Gold Leaf Tobacco and its directors, including Rudland, over alleged tax evasion, and in December 2023 filed a civil damages claim against Sasfin Bank alleging it facilitated the laundering of untaxed funds connected to his operations. No criminal convictions have been reported.

Orangeville says production and export figures for the current harvest will be released once harvesting is complete.
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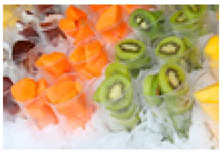

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