



PRODUCT NEWS

Pan Mixers - Rugged equipment for rugged terrain

Africa is a rugged continent that requires rugged equipment, and Pan Mixers' ability to provide first-world technology wrapped in third-world resilience has won the company several contracts around Africa.

The latest of these is for the supply, delivery and installation of two VB4X block plants for construction giant Odebrecht's operation in Luanda. Odebrecht is a Brazilian business conglomerate in the field of engineering and construction, as well as chemicals and petrochemicals. The company was founded in 1944 and has operations in South America, Central America and the Caribbean, North America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

"Odebrecht approached us around two years ago regarding expertise and equipment to fulfill some of its needs on large housing contracts in Luanda," says Pan Mixers' director Robert Ebeling. "The order for the first of the two VB4X plants was met in record time, with one machine shipped off within 12 weeks of the order being placed."

Co-director Walter Ebeling adds that the VB4X is a highly-efficient piece of equipment for the manufacture of hollow blocks, as well as bricks and paving. "The machinery has aggregate bin and weigh belt batching systems, as well as allowing for the weighing of both bulk and bagged cement. Each plant comprises a 1 500 liter counter current rapid pan mixer. The benefit of two individual plants is that they can run two different product ranges simultaneously."

Fitted with high performance electronic control systems and hydraulic control systems, the VB4X offers extremely fast and smooth running, with a high product capacity. "The control systems reduce wear and tear," says Robert, "which is vital in outlying areas in Africa where equipment or parts can take months to reach sites. Even though we met a tight deadline, and shipping from Johannesburg to Luanda took another three weeks, the equipment could not be delivered to site for eight months."

The first plant has been installed, and the second will be up-and-running within the next three weeks. "You can't underestimate the challenges that some African locations provide," he says, "which is why it's important for overseas concerns to ensure their equipment and personnel can stand up to conditions here."

Pan Mixers' equipment has been proven in Africa for the harsh conditions that exist here. Walter explains, "We also take into account that many of the operators will not be highly skilled, or there may be language issues. Product quality has to withstand both the terrain and the personnel, and we believe that we take care of that."

With Odebrecht running on tight timelines, Pan Mixers has sent six staff members to the site to install the equipment. That, too, has not been without its challenges, says Robert: "There is a lot of rain right now, and the site isn't developed. Transportation is a massive challenge, and in order to meet our deadline, we sent the machinery in pieces for reassembly on site. Nothing can be taken for granted; however, and one has to deal with challenges such as where to find a welding machine in a hurry!"

Pan Mixers has been supplying equipment around the continent for some eight years now, so its experience is valuable to clients. Still, the company sees vast opportunities on the continent. "The global downturn has slowed down the rate of growth in Africa, but as soon as raw material prices rise again, the development will continue," concludes Walter. "Pan Mixers is getting a number of enquiries from all over the continent, and we see it as an important market."