

Business expansion in the mix

Africa's leading manufacturer of concrete block, brick and paving machinery, Pan Mixers South Africa has helped Bricks 4 Africa expand its production levels and raise its business to new heights, says Vernon Smith, owner, of Bricks 4 Africa.

Productivity has increased 300% since the company purchased an upgraded VB4 brick-making machine from Pan Mixers to replace the smaller RE600 Pan Mixers machine. Bricks 4 Africa supplies stock-bricks for Breaking New Ground government housing projects in Potchefstroom.

Smith says that this has improved productivity from 14 stock-bricks every 15-second cycle, to 60 in every 11-second cycle. As a result, overall production has increased from 28 000 stock-bricks per day to more than 100 000 per day with the new machinery.

"Previously, we were never able to keep

up with demand, and always had a shortage of stock in the brickyard - owing to the fact that the RE600 was only capable of producing smaller loads. The computerised PLC control panel system on the VB4 machine stores up to 12 recipes for various bricks, which enables us to produce stock quickly and effectively. The VB4 machine has made a considerable difference, and has enabled us to expand into paving, an area offering us great potential for future growth," says Smith.

He points out that his three-year relationship with PMSA has seen Bricks 4 Africa grow from strength-to-strength. "The reliability of PMSA machinery has meant that we are able to function at maximum efficiency without suffering any major downtime. What's more, if there is a problem, PMSA always has spares and stock available, and is able to find a solution to our problems immediately," PMSA director Walter Ebeling says. "Many of our customers have

started off with one smaller machine and eventually purchased more machinery to create a larger plant. Upgrading the hydraulics and PLC systems on the VB4 has seen Bricks 4 Africa achieve excellent cycle times, and PMSA is committed to helping them build on that in any way possible in the future."

Ebeling believes that more action needs to be taken to address the socio-economic challenges that face the South African housing market but despite the poor performance from the local housing market over the past few months, PMSA has seen a rise in demand for bricks and brick-making machinery in the last month. "This is due to a slowly-recovering market. The recent increase in demand is a positive sign for the industry, even if it is only as a result of a backlog of projects. I expect the economy to turn early next year and hopefully that will

have a long-lasting and positive effect on the housing market," says Ebeling.

"While the global economic downturn has had a negative effect on the South African housing market, Bricks 4 Africa has been stronger than ever," says Smith. He hinted that the company could consider franchising. "The demand for our products locally is the highest it has ever been. This success rate has risen to the extent that our 20 000m² factory has proved to be insufficient. A second 1 200 m² site was purchased in order to keep up with demand. If this growth continues, we will look at expanding nationwide," says Smith.

