

Kerry Group fuels growth in Africa with Afribon acquisition

Kerry Group, a business-to-business ingredient solutions provider for the food, beverage and pharmaceutical markets, has expanded its footprint in Africa following its acquisition of Rwanda-based Afribon.



Source: Kerry Group

Launched in 2012, Afribon is specialised in the development, production and marketing of food flavours and comprises five production sites, in Cameroon and East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania). The pan-African food flavour development company provides flavour solutions in beverages, food service, confectionery, baked goods and dairy category, and is consequently a neat fit for Kerry Group.

While Kerry Group already has a presence in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, the company's regional vice president Peter Dillane says the acquisition is a significant expansion of its business in Africa, and importantly enables the localisation of its products and services. This is of particular importance when it comes to the development of new product ideas to formulation, recipe adjustment and initial production set up, given the diversity of regions and cuisine in Africa.

“Flavour and taste is highly localised, and therefore developing formulas and inputs for food manufacturers keen to take advantage of the regions must be equally specialised. We have seen this across the various global markets where we have worked with our customers to develop product innovations,” Dillane says, adding that the company is excited to expand their product co-creation services in the region, bolstered by Afribon’s local market expertise.



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Kerry Group is one of the globe's foremost companies in the food ingredients, taste and nutrition solutions space. Its considerable research and development arm is available for customers looking for a co-creation partner for their activities in the fields of: Ideation, launch and impact; entering new categories/sub-channels; enabling increased speed to market; and delivering efficiencies across operations.

“The East African market will now benefit from access to Kerry’s more than 300 PhDs and Masters among its R&D division’s 1,100 scientists. This capacity is now available to build on the roots that Afribon has already established and which has the purpose of bringing local taste to life. Our vibrant tastes appeal particularly to the younger generations, which is nowhere more numerous than in Africa.

“Our R&D is focused on bringing what are already inspired East African beverages and foods to life, as well as bringing the next generation of food products to life through taste, health & wellness and sugar reduction,” says Dillane.

Global capability, executed locally

In turn, Afribon Group is a regional African flavour house whose business philosophy is to cultivate a deep understanding of local markets and consumer preferences, so as to reduce complexity for them. Parallel to Kerry, it supports clients from the development of new product ideas to formulation, recipe adjustment and initial production set up.

“We have been pleased to work with food manufacturers to develop products in line with the unique demands of the East African market - from both a nutrition and flavour perspective. As we join hands with Kerry Group, our customers can have a wider expert pool to respond to consumer needs,” states Afribon cofounder Anne Merienne at the sidelines of the Afmass Food Expo.

In a shared statement, the two companies state that the combination of Kerry and Afribon will accentuate the existing deep understanding and local insights of the East African consumer preference, while Kerry's experience of retail and food service channels will enhance Afribon’s ability to partner customers with greater success.

Julien Giuge, Afribon MD, adds, “What we have now is global capability, executed locally by our team backed by the full technical and operational backing of Kerry. For our customers, this implies faster product development and delivery, locally stocked ingredients, greater flexibility and reduced lead times to support growing local customers.”



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Tailored innovations

One of Kerry’s major strengths it brings to the African markets is its ability to tailor its innovations to the needs of particular clients. The challenge facing many food and beverage manufacturers is the demand for greater nutrition in their products. However, in the process of nutritionally optimising such products manufacturers can typically unbalance their recipe by, for instance, reducing sugar, moving to alternative proteins, adding functional Ingredients, and other changes.

Kerry states that it has the in-house nutritional portfolio expertise that understands taste challenges inherent to such a

nutritional upgrade.

“Therefore, when developing solutions, we do not look at taste in isolation but take a holistic approach using our entire range of technologies. We help clients create nutritionally optimised products while maintaining the taste and mouthfeel consumers want,” concludes Kerry Group's East Africa country manager, Regis Manyange.

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