

R500 000 BURSARY FOR CHEMICAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS

Four second-year students studying for their BSc in chemical engineering at the School of Chemical Engineering of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, have received a bursary of R500 000 to see them through their studies. The students were screened in-house by the university.

The bursary was provided by Durban-based Isegen, world-renowned manufacturer of food acidulants, plasticisers.

"There is a shortage of chemical engineers in the country. We need more of them. This is our contribution towards meeting the demand and at the same time assisting previously disadvantaged students," said Robert Fowlds, managing director of Isegen.

He added that the chemical industry in South Africa had a positive history of innovation, import replacement and export generation and needed support from the private sector to alleviate the skills shortage. Fowlds offered the students part-time employment for their practical training. When they had obtained their degrees, he



Seated from left are the four bursary students: Nosipho Mzobe, Siyabonga Mkhise, Arthur Mdhluli and Mphumteli Mavimbela. Standing are Robert Fowlds, managing director of Isegen (left) and Prof Milan Carsky.

would consider offering them full-time employment or assist in finding them employment in the industry. 75% of Isegen's acidulants production is exported to over 50 countries worldwide.

Professor Milan Carsky, professor at the School of Chemical Engineering, said the university was most grateful for this bursary as there were many students who could not afford their fees. "The demand for chemical engineers is on the rise. There are very few

chemical engineers in Africa. However, South Africa is in a very fortunate position, with numerous large multinational companies doing research locally".

The KZN School of Chemical Engineering is the largest in Africa and has an active post-graduate research programme. The chemical engineering programme is accredited by the Engineering Council of South Africa and internationally under the Washington Accord.



Isegen's giant butane storage tank at Isipingo, Durban recently completed at considerable cost. Butane is pumped from the adjacent Sapref plant and stored partly to offset the annual Sapref's shutdowns.

R3,4m upgrade for Isegen site

DEREK ALBERTS

SOUTH Africa's only manufacturer of food acidulants, Isegen, has expanded its cold water soluble (CWS) fumaric acid capacity at its Isipingo, Durban site at a cost of R3.4-million.

The new plant came on stream in April. The expansion is due to increased demand locally and overseas for fumaric acid. The company's food acidulants, such as malic acid, fumaric acid and frutaric acid, are exported to 50 countries worldwide.

The new plant will be using tried and tested technology developed in South Africa in the 1970's.

"The increase in demand is attributed to Isegen's quality consistency and reliability in the face of an ever growing list of problems related to quality and trustworthiness of some food acidulants emanating from the Far East," said managing director Robert Fowlds.

According to food technologists and food manufacturing companies, he added, CWS fumaric acid is an excellent food acidulant.

Normal fumaric acid, known as hot water soluble (HWS), unfortunately suffers from a slow dissolution rate in ambient water. Although it is satisfactory when used in products such as jell-

ies, canned foods, marmalades and jams, where the processing involves higher temperatures, it is not ideal for use in dry powder beverages.

"Isegen has overcome this problem by manufacturing a CWS grade of fumaric acid, which dissolves rapidly in cold water that can be used in dry powder beverages with great success.

Fumaric acid is the most powerful of the food acidulants where savings of up to 40% can be achieved compared to the quantity of citric acid that would be required to achieve similar results," said Fowlds.

The products are Halaal and Kosher.