

# SA food acids to China

It is ironic that so many South African food processors continue to import citric acid from China at unrealistically cheap prices while their counterparts in China prefer using malic acid – a unique granular product developed and manufactured in South Africa.

This is according to Robert Fowlds, MD of Isegen SA, the local food adjuvant manufacturer with plants at Isipingo and Umgeni in KZN and at Germiston in Gauteng.

Isegen manufactures malic acid using 100% local raw materials and technology wholly developed in South Africa.

The unique granular product is well accepted globally because it is dust free, free flowing,

and competitively priced. Despite the generally accepted physical and chemical benefits of malic acid over citric acid, many South African manufacturers only look to the cheap cost of the imported citric acid.

As small quantities of food acids are used in the end product, consumers would not be unduly affected by a change to malic acid, but the end product would be superior in many ways, and a South African industry would be supported, he said.

Currently, of all the citric acid imported into South Africa, nearly 90% is from China and the export price is less than 50% of that from reputable manufacturers in the West.

"It is significant that we are able to compete in China with our malic acid against citric acid, where China is by far the largest manufacturer of citric in the world.

This is because the Chinese food technicians understand the benefit and synergy of combining malic acid with citric acid, even though malic acid is more expensive," Fowlds said. He recently visited China, where Isegen has been supplying malic acid for some time, mainly to sweet and candy manufacturers.

"The scale of manufacturing in China is awesome, especially around the city of Guangzhou in south-east China, called the 'factory of the world' because everything is made there and

in vast quantities. Some 200 candy manufacturers exist and one of those visited, BVI Hsu Fu Chi Holdings Ltd., employs over 10 000 people."

Fowlds said that hopefully things would begin to change in China, forcing the exporters to price more competitively and fairly, as there was concern about pollution and effluent control. In addition, a move to semi-private banking would mean that manufacturers would have to pay interest and return capital at economy-related rates. Hopefully, this will happen sooner rather than later, before more South African industries are decimated by cheap imports, he said.

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### **SA food acids for Russia**

THE unique granular malic acid manufactured by a food acidulant manufacturer in Durban has been hailed as displaying the best quality on record by the company's Russian agent, following the success of the company's first Russian export order in September. A second consignment has been dispatched. The company manufactures malic acid using technology wholly developed in South Africa and using 100% local raw materials. Malic acid is used in the food industry in the production of beverages, confectionary, sauces, cider, wines and numerous other food products.

## SA develops world's first fruitaric acid plant

**A**cidulant manufacturer Isegen, of Durban, has developed the first fruitaric acid plant in the world, built at a cost of R8-million. Fruitaric acid is an alternative for citric acid, and has already been patented worldwide.

The product has the potential to compete in the world organic food acidulants market, currently well in excess of one-million tons a year, says Isegen MD **Robert Powlis**.

He adds that the unusual characteristics of this invention would make it the product of choice for many niche areas of this market where, for example, citric acid suffers from certain unfavourable physical and chemical properties.

The main consumer of this pro-

duct is the dry-powder beverage industry. Other key markets include food processing, jellies and food mixes, confectionaries, canned fruit and jams, baking, chewing gums, and ice cream and sorbets.

The first production of fruitaric acid complements Isegen's reputation in this field, having already had a number of achievements in food acidulants, such as the commercial production of granular malic acid and granular cold-water soluble fumaric acid.

Besides food acidulants, Isegen also manufactures maleic anhydride, the primary raw material used in the manufacture of food acidulants, phthalic anhydride, and different esters.

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