

## Eskort expands Gauteng production capacity by 50%

Eskort, South Africa's leading pork manufacturer, has expanded its Gauteng production capacity by 50% with a factory extension officially launched in mid-February.



Image supplied

The 10,000m<sup>2</sup> development in Heidelberg – the small town where the company has produced world-class pork products for 70 years – will allow Eskort to increase production to meet retail needs.

The enlarged factory is equipped with the largest continuous box freezer in Africa, capable of freezing 120,000kg of products to minus 18°C every 24 hours. Boxes move on a conveyor belt through the freezing chamber where the air is kept at minus 41°C – a temperature that occurs naturally only in polar regions.

Chilled and frozen warehouses in Heidelberg now have multi-level picking mezzanine floor systems, the first of their kind in the food industry in South Africa. These systems maximise vertical space by including mezzanine floors that create additional levels for storage and picking, and they allow Eskort to handle a high volume of orders quickly and efficiently.

Arnold Prinsloo, Eskort chief executive officer for the past 17 years, says the core objective of the factory extension is to create efficiencies. “A big part of this expansion includes the addition of carcass chillers as well as the installation of a huge box freezer to accommodate the influx of raw material,” he says.

“This addition doubles our chilled and frozen cold stores, resulting in efficient picking and staging areas and allowing us to eliminate outsourcing costs, and our deboning lines have increased in size to meet the ever-rising demand. We also have new dispatch areas and loading bays to maximise productivity.”

The opening of the factory extension marks the next phase of growth for a company started in the small KwaZulu-Natal Midlands town of Estcourt in 1917. Eskort’s farmers are shareholders in the company, its pork is antibiotic-free, and a massive investment in biosecurity – backed by international and local certification – means its premium export-quality products enjoy the trust of consumers throughout South Africa.

The factory extension is a sign of Eskort’s resilience, adaptability and vision, and testament to the efficacy of the leadership lessons it has absorbed through good times and bad over more than a century.

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