

# Hospitality and Foodbiz West Africa benefits from SA experience

Johannesburg-based expo organiser, Exhibition Management Services (EMS) has joined forces with Ghana-based Events and Projects International (EPI) to stage Hospitality and Foodbiz West Africa in Ghana at the Accra International Conference Centre from 2-4 October 2013.



John Thomson

The Ghana Ministry of Tourism, Ghana Tourism Authority, Ghana Tourism Federation, the Institute of Hospitality Ghana and the Institute of Packaging Ghana the expo.

"The hospitality and food industries in sub-Saharan Africa are on the verge of explosive growth due to rapid economic expansion across the region," says John Thomson of EMS. "West Africa is about to get a big taste of the good life this year with its own hospitality, food and beverage expo."

"Accra is the perfect host city for this business event, as it provides an ideal infrastructure to accommodate all the exhibitors and visitors we are expecting at the show. Ghana exemplifies the growth that is possible in Africa; that is why it is a paradise for entrepreneurs. It has a stable political climate and advanced infrastructure, strong economic growth of over 8% and a fast-growing middle class with money to spend."

## African economic growth

"Africa has a rich culture with a fast growing economy and countless opportunities. The 21st century belongs to Africa, the world's new economic frontier. Now is the time to start doing business."

He is enthusiastic about the positive changes taking place in many countries across Africa. What is encouraging is that this stability trend is steadily spreading to other countries in the region on the back of World Bank incentives, promoting a

positive environment for stronger economic growth and even more business opportunities.

"There is so much growth in mining, manufacturing, agriculture and service business going on all over Central and West Africa. More people are being employed; more people are doing business, more tourists are visiting. The entire region needs rapid expansion of its food business and hospitality sectors to accommodate this rapidly increasing demand."

He believes this is the reason why many South African companies in the food and hospitality sectors have already signed up for the new event. "The interest in the expo has been far stronger than we expected."

## **Rising hospitality sector**

"One of the best economic indicators for any country or region is the number of hotel rooms it has. The well-known W Hospitality Group has increased its room count in sub-Saharan Africa by 42% in the last five years and another big hotel operator, Accor, is also expanding its footprint; it already has 54 hotels in 14 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, clearly an important region for its business. It is planning to add another 5000 rooms by 2016 and open 35 new hotels by 2020, all in Africa."

West Africa also appeals to the world's alcohol industry. "South Africa is very significant for us, but actually growth in West Africa - Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana - is even faster," confirms Nick Blazquez, president of alcohol distributor Diageo Africa. "More consumers have got disposable income and we see this rapidly evolving middle class."

Thomson's exhibition staging expertise spans over 30 years in 16 countries across Africa. His company is renowned for several successful South African trade shows - Africa's Big Seven, SAITEX and INDUTEC and this lends credence to the Ghana show.

"This event provides a versatile, localised platform for companies across Africa and the world to showcase their products, brands and services to a business audience focussed on expanding into new markets. It's an opportunity nobody can ignore," he concludes.

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