

## Towards greener charcoal

Namibia Charcoal Association launches its research and development centre

*Otjiwarongo, 24 June 2020.* A collaboration between Namibia Charcoal Association (NCA), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), on behalf of the Federal Government of Germany, and private partnerships resulted in the launch of a charcoal village research and development centre in Otjiwarongo last week. The centre was developed to upskill charcoal workers and processors and will be used as a satellite for field trainings, demonstrations and pilot projects on harvesting techniques as well as production processes.

“We saw a huge surplus of charcoal as many producers turned to charcoal after the severe drought that hit the country last year,” Isak Katali, NCA chairperson points out. “Our centre will be mainly used for research and development as well as demonstrations on new and old charcoal technology combined with improved burning processes.”

The first micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) pilot training is planned until mid-July 2020 aimed at empowering charcoal producers with new sustainable production techniques that are environmentally friendly. This pilot phase will inform more training sessions in the nearer future for about 1000 youth in line with the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade (MIT) Charcoal Growth at Home strategy to ensure that the industry is enhanced at all levels of the value chain. “MIT is committed to greening the charcoal sector. We will spearhead the establishment of Namibia Standards for charcoal production to provide a conducive environment for producers,” Dr Humavindu points out. MIT will further support the establishment of a testing facility to allow adherence to international standards and allow products to be tested in Namibia.

NCA has already developed and successfully implemented new burning techniques on a number of farms. The centre will combine demonstrations on both new and old charcoal technology such as the smoke distillation equipment that harvests wood acid and tar. This equipment reduces the smoke emission by at least 60 per cent, in some instances even more than that. The smoke travels through a condenser pipe and a black box into a chimney. In the black box, tar and wood acid are collected. Each burning cycle produces around 40 litres of wood acid. Wood acid, and specifically humic acid, derived from the wood acid, is a food for bacteria in soil and thus reduces fertiliser input. Both wood acid and tar can be used on the farm or sold.

In 2019 charcoal exports constituted 17 per cent of total agricultural exports. The NCA recorded 140,000 tonnes of charcoal produced by its members in 2019, an estimated 195,000 tonnes of charcoal were produced by the industry. “This figure will increase in 2020 as many members have enrolled with us,” echoed Mr Katali.

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### Photos and Captions

#### Welcome and keynote address

Image 1: Mr. Isak Katali, Namibia Charcoal Association Board member welcomes visitors to the official opening of the charcoal village in Otjiwarongo.

Image 2: Dr. Michael Humavindu, Deputy Executive Director of Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade officially opened the charcoal village.

Testing grounds

Image 3: A glimpse of the area where different kilns are used together with smoke distillation equipment.

Sponsored equipment

Image 4: Handover of the GIZ sponsored equipment to NCA at the inauguration of the research and development centre.

**Attachment: Speeches during the ceremony**