

Saskcan buys pulse plant

By Karen Briere
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Saskcan Pulse Trading has acquired a majority share of Horizon Seed Processors in Aberdeen, Sask., extending its reach throughout the pulse growing area of the province.

The company hopes to capitalize on more opportunities in yellow and green peas by expanding beyond its locations in Regina and Rosetown. It also puts Saskcan into the seed business.

"We've acquired a proven plant with staff" said Saskcan president Murad Al-Katib. "We're expanding into a little bit of a nontraditional geographic area for us."

The Aberdeen location, northeast of Saskatoon, will be known as Saskcan Horizon. Al-Katib said the company identified Horizon as a good fit because of its location. He said the new location should alleviate transportation pressures in Regina by spreading container demand to the Saskatoon area.

He declined to reveal financial details of the deal expected to close by mid June. The current owners will retain shares in the new company. Upgrades to the facility, including splitting capacity, will begin immediately.

Merlin Shields, Horizon general manager, said the company was established in 1995 and has been predominantly a toll processor for other companies



Murad Al-Katib, president and chief executive officer of Saskcan Pulse Trading in Regina, says a recent purchase fits the company strategy. (File photo)

including Saskcan.

The plant has two cleaning lines, one for peas and one for lentils. Both will be able to clean lentils after the upgrades are done.

Shields described the deal as a partnership that will benefit both companies: "We want to expand our markets and Saskcan wants to expand its reach."

In Regina, the company has completed a \$2 million expansion to its east-side plant's splitting capacity and now has two independent lines to process peas and lentils at the same time.

"We're ready for the increased red lentil acreage," said Al-Katib.

Saskcan has not renewed its lease at the plant west of Regina known as Saskcan West. "We want to concentrate on owned assets and to continue to solidify our position," he said.

The company's Rosetown plant has been successful and is drawing more production from north of Davidson.

Ten new jobs will be created in Aberdeen, along with a Regina management position. Al-Katib said entering the seed business "fits with our program of being a leader in adoption of new red lentil varieties" and with Saskcan's long-term strategy of getting closer to its best growers of milling quality pulses.

He said the increasing demand for food grade, high quality peas presents long-term opportunities for value-added processing and packaging.