



Drying perishables on-farm

Dryers for Africa manufactures a range of on-farm dryers aimed at smaller farmers who want to add value to produce that would normally be wasted. The company's range of Agri Dryers can be used to dry fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, herbs and flowers. The Agri Dryer evolved from the needs for a relatively small, affordable, versatile and efficient unit.

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The Agri Dryer evolved from the needs for a relatively small, affordable, versatile and efficient unit to add value to agricultural products that would otherwise be unsuitable for the market due to quality, shelf life, transport and level of skilled labour available. The smaller units can be transported on a small truck and thus be shared amongst farmers. Standard models cost around \$5,000 for 40kg dryer and around \$8,000 for a 60kg dryer.

According to Hamish Brebner, designers of the dryers, they are even suitable for rural communities wanting to generate income through drying wild fruit such as marulas. The only requirement is access to electricity. "The dryer is designed to be user friendly. The process is easily understood, the controls are simple and only minimal maintenance is necessary. The parts are also easily accessible and attainable," he says.

The capacities of the dryers' range from drying 200kg to 500kg prepared fruit, resulting in 40kg to 100kg of dried product per 12-hour batch. The fruit is prepared during normal working hours. When ready, it is packed onto trays that are then stacked onto trolleys. The trolleys are wheeled into a tunnel, which houses the fans and heating elements, and the drying process is started. Drying is usually done overnight as it needs no labour. After a predetermined time the process is stopped and the trolleys and trays are removed.

Semi-continuous drying, using the same models but with extra trolleys and trays on a one-in-one-out basis over a continuous period (i.e. five, six or even seven days) is possible too. This achieves a far greater input and output, and at a greater efficiency. Up to 1,600kg dried product per 24 hours can be produced in this way.

Dryers for Africa will also design and custom build dryers to meet specific needs.



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