

EEP PROJECT SPARKS PLANS FOR A 35MW RENEWABLE ENERGY POWER PLANT IN SWAZILAND



When TechnoServe Swaziland and Montigny partnered for the EEP funded project in 2015, the original plan was to investigate the feasibility of creating carbonized biomass pellets. Shortly after, the project titled “Maximizing Timber Waste for Energy Generation in Swaziland” started to look at a whole different scale of energy generation. Montigny had just completed a pre-feasibility study for a renewable biomass power plant on the mill site, and the partners found that the optimal use of resources at the sawmill site would in fact be utilizing all available forest residues and sawmill offcuts for a 35 MW renewable power plant.

Although biomass pellets may still be a future option for Montigny, the power plant was recognised to hold the greatest potential for positive environmental, employment and livelihoods upliftment for the nation: a 35MW plant can supply more than 20% of Swaziland’s current energy demand. The economic stimulus from the plant will also generate significant savings for an economy, which has typically imported 80% of its electricity from neighboring South Africa. Montigny has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Swaziland’s Local Electricity Utility (SEC) on the project, and will shortly initiate the Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) negotiations for a 20+ year contract with the Utility.

The planned power plant will be built at the present mill site in the centre of the 55,000 Hectare Usutu plantation. Montigny currently employs approximately 7,000 local resources, which makes up nearly 10% of the private sector workforce in a country of 1.2 million inhabitants. The power plant will give a good boost for further job creation. The company has also focused on strengthening community relationships with their neighbors by establishing and communicating policies and programs that benefit both parties for the long term. A great demonstration of this work is the Community Wattle Development, an invasive jungle rehabilitation program where Montigny together with TechnoServe have trained local landowners to effectively and sustainably operate smallholder plantations. The programme has resulted up to ten times higher incomes for the landowners, and simultaneously secured, better quality wattle for Montigny’s current operations and the future power plant.

Another combined effort of Montigny and TechnoServe is a honey harvesting training for local villages around the site. Linkage between honey and power plant might not be obvious, but sustainable honey harvesting is actually crucial for preventing forest fires that are caused by traditional method of evicting the bees with smoke. Honey harvesting can also offer much needed additional income while the landowners wait for their wattle plantations to bring the yield.

This EEP project is a great demonstration on what can be achieved with the right partner and good timing. The EEP project that brought TechnoServe and Montigny together to evaluate the efficient use of timber waste led to plans for creating a whole new business sector in Swaziland. And with the help of the EEP grant, financing various studies was fast-tracked and the ambitious plans got off the ground.

The EEP Grant was instrumental in bringing together two entities in Swaziland with great respect for each other who required the support of funding to join forces. TechnoServe’s deep community development and entrepreneur training experience coupled with Montigny’s forestry, engineering and sawmilling background have accelerated development initiatives that have reached 30 Chiefdoms and eventually the entire country as the programmes continue to grow.

Kelly CureMontigny

[Montigny](#) and [TechnoServe](#) see the power plant project as the greatest benefit for the future of the company and surrounding communities. The plant is expected to be operational within the next three years, and the partners aspire that this success story will be further replicated on various other biomass sites around and outside Swaziland.