

PETR BENEŠ:

AFRICA FASCINATED US WITH ITS FREEDOM

PETR BENEŠ, THE OWNER OF THE AQUEL BOHEMIA COMPANY, WITH THE REGISTERED OFFICE IN LIBEREC, CZECH REPUBLIC, DOES NOT REGRET JOINING HIS BUSINESS PLANS WITH DRINKING WATER. DURING TWELVE YEARS OF WORK IN THIS BRANCH, HE HAS GAINED RESPECT EVEN ABROAD. RECENTLY, HE HAS BEEN HEADING TO AFRICA, WISHING TO GIVE PEOPLE SOMETHING THAT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED IN A LOT OF OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD: WHOLESOME WATER.



Petr Beneš, the owner of Aquel Company

Can you present your company to us briefly?

The company was established at the beginning of 2000, based on my idea of providing people with top-class technology of water filtration, leading to high level of comfort without buying bottled water. We offered also cooperation opportunities, and at present we have about 150 000 satisfied customers all over the world.

With regard to your work in Africa: why did you choose Mali to test the new filtration system?

We have had long-term contacts and the necessary background in that country.

Do you rely on subsidies when using the system? What is, actually, the price of such a device?

We plan to make use of subsidies from the European Union, the African Union and the International

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The selling price is determined at 25 thousand EURO for one device for a village with 150 to 200 inhabitants.

In what regions of Africa did you test the system in 2010 and 2011?

The African expeditions tested a small portable Aquel filtration system with an output of 300 litres per day. It treated different water sources - rivers, wells, creeks. The tests took place in Mali, Namibia, Botswana and Zambia.

How did that continent impress you?

I visited Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and the Republic of South Africa during my own expedition I had organized for twelve persons for thirty days. Africa fascinated us with the contrasts of wealth and poverty, tribal life, luxurious vineyards, nature and freedom. But individual localities have also high level of danger and great humility and respect are needed for a human to adapt and to survive.

Do you expect using also local workforce in Mali?

The main engineers will come from the Czech Republic. But we will create a group of service workers in Africa under our guidance. The project will include also their training and supervision. In the second half of next year we want to install tens of filtration devices on the Malian territory each month. We expect also other African countries to get involved in the project in the future.

Can you describe your range of products? What can we imagine under the term of cleaning technology?

It includes products working on the principle

of dry steam with the temperature of 150 °C and the pressure of 8 bar. Thanks to that technology, it is possible to clean and degrease thoroughly almost anything, without using any other cleaning agent than water. Further, our range of products includes vacuum cleaners based on water whirl, with special beaters, as well as air cleaners with six-degree filtration with the help of a water wall to which the surrounding air is driven under pressure.

What is manufactured in the Czech Republic and to which countries do you export your products?

We manufacture the filtration devices by ourselves; the other products are custom-made for us. At present we export to Slovakia, the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Russia and Kazakhstan.

How has your business developed during recent five years? Have you been affected by the crisis?

The crisis in the Czech Republic affects us partially due to the stagnation of turnover. But we have changed our business strategy. We offer special credits, the opportunity of instalments without price increase and with zero down payments for up to seven years and we have significantly strengthened our marketing. In the Ukraine, we have terminated our business activities due to the crisis and we wait for the country to stabilize. On the contrary, in Russia we have been experiencing a significant growth of sales since 2009 and now we have a monthly turnover of 80 million CZK. During recent five years, the AQUEL Group has strengthened its position particularly thanks to its activities abroad where the turnover has grown by 150 per cent. The expected turnover of the AQUEL Group of this year amounts to 1,5 billion CZK and in 2013, we are expecting about two billions.

Text: Jozef Gáfrík

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