

The evolution of Africa's lubricants and additive manufacturing market

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Africa is a diverse and rapidly developing continent, home to over 1.4 billion people and a wealth of natural resources. With rising urbanisation, expanding industrial activity, and a growing middle class, many African economies are experiencing sustained growth. This progress has had a direct impact on the lubricants industry, which is closely linked to key economic indicators such as GDP, industrialisation, and vehicle density.

Traditionally dominated by multinational oil companies, Africa's lubricants market is now evolving, with an increasing number of local blending plants emerging across the continent. Countries like Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt are leading the way, representing the largest and most dynamic markets. As local manufacturing gains momentum, the continent is witnessing a shift toward greater self-reliance, affordability, and innovation in lubricant production.

Historically, the lubricants industry in Africa was dominated by International Oil Companies (IOCs). These global giants established their presence long before many African nations gained independence, securing market dominance throughout the 20th century. Their long-standing brand recognition, extensive supply networks, and technological edge allowed them to monopolise the lubricants space for decades.

However, the tide has been shifting over the past few decades. The rise of communication technology, improved access to education, and the accumulation of wealth have empowered several African nations to build their own lubricant blending facilities. These facilities range from government-owned operations to joint ventures with IOCs and entirely privately owned entities. With lubricant blending and formulation technology becoming increasingly accessible and reproducible, many countries across the continent are

witnessing a surge in the establishment of blending plants.

Beyond blending facilities, two primary raw materials are essential in the production of lubricants: base oils and additives. Base oils are derived from petroleum refining, while additives are produced through specialised chemical processes. For many years, the global lubricant additive market was controlled by just four major manufacturers. But in the last two decades, increased demand and broader market access have paved the way for new players to enter the African additives supply chain.

Nigeria and other neighbouring nations also benefit. These neighboring nations benefit from the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), which enables duty-free trade within the region. This has allowed Adipro to ensure shorter lead times, better product customisation, and proximity to its R&D and testing centers—advantages that international competitors cannot easily match.

Despite these achievements, the journey has not been without challenges. Locally producing additives in Nigeria requires substantial investment, not just in production but also in state-of-the-art testing facilities. Regulatory hurdles, market acceptance, supply chain disruptions, logistics inefficiencies, and currency devaluation have posed significant barriers. Additionally, the market growth remains sluggish in certain segments, which has impacted profitability projections.

In conclusion, Africa's lubricants industry is undergoing a transformation, fueled by industrial growth, increasing motorisation, and a shift toward local production.

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