Starbucks to Move VIA Instant Coffee Production to Ga.

TIM RAUSCH, The Augusta Chronicle

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Starbucks [1] is closer to making instant coffee in Augusta.

The Seattle-based company currently produces its VIA product line in Europe, but it will be moving production here when its south Augusta facility [2] is fully operational. About 70 employees have been hired and packaging operations started in October at the Augusta Corporate Park facility.

Landing the $172 million Starbucks plant was the Deal of the Year in 2012. The Georgia Economic Developers Association lauded the Augusta Economic Development Authority for the project.

Company spokeswoman Laurel Harper said a month to have the facility completed has not been pinpointed. Hiring efforts continue to staff the other half of the facility. It will have about 140 employees when done.

"With an abundance of skilled workers, a great quality of life, convenient access to transportation and strong support from local and state leaders, Augusta is an ideal location for our newest manufacturing facility," said Howard Schultz, Starbucks' chairman and chief executive.

The new Augusta plant will be Starbucks' fifth manufacturing facility in the U.S. It will produce a range of soluble products, such as VIA Ready Brew, and ingredients for Frappuccino and other ready-to-drink beverages. The products made in Augusta will be shipped to North America and Europe, the company reported.

The 160,000-square-foot LEED-certified building will be capable of producing up to 4,000 metric tons annually.

Starbucks employs about 182,000 people worldwide. It has a warehouse and distribution center in Atlanta and a roasting facility in Sandy Run, S.C.

Augusta Renewable Energy is setting up next to the facility and will take the used coffee grounds from Starbucks and convert them into energy. The company, a division of Columbia-based First Generation Energy, is spending $20 million on its anaerobic digestion facility.

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Information from: The Augusta Chronicle , http://www.augustachronicle.com [3]

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