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## RATO-Denver Global deal to bring 450 jobs to the Lincolnton area

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Denver Global Products Inc. has picked Lincoln County for its 360,000-square-foot assembly and distribution operation.

That decision should bring 450 jobs to the Lincolnton-area facility as it begins assembling and distributing Chongqing RATO Power Co. Ltd. products in North America. RATO bought Denver Global earlier this year.

RATO and Denver Global will occupy the former Crate & Barrel building in Lincoln County Industrial Park. The companies plan to spend \$30.2 million to set up an assembly and distribution center there for RATO products.

Roger Leon, president of RATO North America, says he expects initially to use about one third of the building. Later, as the two companies begin manufacturing engines and vehicles, employment could jump to 600, RATO announced earlier this year.

Denver Global will receive \$3.6 million in state incentives for locating in Lincoln County. Lincoln County is also offering incentives for the deal.

RATO considered building in York or Cabarrus counties before deciding on Lincoln County. In Rock Hill, the company looked a land in the Riverwalk community, shopping the operation under the code name "Project Raven."

"Many of us live in Lincoln County, we started our company in Lincoln County and we are all pleased with the opportunity to continue to grow our business from our base here," Leon says.

Chongqing RATO Power, the parent of RATO in the United States, which is based in south-central China, came to this country on Jan. 1 when it bought Denver Global Products of Denver, N.C. That was a \$70 million transaction that also brought Leon a seat on the RATO board of directors in China.

Speaking in February as he announced that RATO would bring its North American headquarters to Lincoln County, Zhu Liedong, president of Chongqing RATO, said the number of local employees would climb to 600 and perhaps to 1,000.



PHOTO KEN ELKINS

RATO expects to bring 300 employees to the former Crate & Barrel building in Lincoln County Industrial Park by the first quarter of 2013.

Those larger numbers of jobs come as RATO begins manufacturing all-terrain vehicles and other powered vehicles in the Lincoln County facility.

In China, RATO makes motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, generators and commercial pumps, some of which are now imported to the United States.

Leon believes RATO North America's employment will hit 300 by the first quarter of 2013 as the facility reaches its first phase of development.

Crate & Barrel completed the building now leased by RATO in 2009 but never occupied it. A second Crate & Barrel building, located at the corner of Finger Mill Road and Lincoln County Parkway Extension, has been operating since 2005.

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