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How technology is re-engineering retail efficiency



Water insecurity a business risk in the Western Cape, says Alan Winde



By Adrian Ephraim

THE Western Cape's drought has been officially declared a provincial disaster. For business leaders, that's not just an environmental headline - it's a material risk warning that belongs in your quarterly risk register alongside load shedding and logistics failures.

"Water is no longer just a municipal service issue," Western Cape Premier Alan Winde told Cape Business News. "It's an economic risk, and we're treating it as such."

With dam levels falling and multiple municipalities under acute pressure, the province is asking the same question it faced in 2017: can water infrastructure keep pace with economic growth?

This time, the government isn't waiting for "Day Zero" to force action. The disaster declaration is a coordination mechanism designed to deploy engineers faster, escalate failing systems, and unlock emergency powers when local capacity has collapsed.

For business, the message is clear: water insecurity is moving from background noise into foreground planning.

The numbers behind the risk

Since the 2017-2018 near-crisis, the province has invested R284 million purely in water coordination - not infrastructure, but analysis, oversight and strategic pressure on municipalities.

That's dwarfed by what cities are spending. Cape Town alone allocates 40% of its annual capital budget - billions of rands - to water infrastructure.

According to Winde, despite five million residents (up from four million pre-crisis), Cape Town is still using roughly one billion litres per day - the same consumption achieved through emergency restrictions in 2018. That reduction has held because of institutionalised leak detection, pressure management and real-time monitoring.

"If you tell people to save water but there's a gushing leak next door, there's no trust," Winde says. "Fixing leaks and using technology is absolutely central."

Where the exposure is sharpest

Cape Town has built resilience. Smaller municipalities have not.

In Knysna, provincial engineers have been deployed repeatedly to stabilise collapsing systems. Thousands of households aren't properly metered — meaning municipalities are losing both water and the revenue needed to fix infrastructure.

"Water losses are massive in some areas," Winde says. "You have to measure them, fix them and collect the revenue you need to reinvest. Without that, the cycle just repeats."

Towns like Zoar, Kannaland and parts of the Klein Karoo are under acute pressure. The Garden Route is particularly vulnerable.

Business is already moving - at a cost

Many companies haven't waited for the government. Boreholes, storage tanks and water recycling systems are becoming standard capital investments, just as solar and batteries became essential during the energy crisis.

But unlike renewable energy, there's no Section 12B rebate for water infrastructure. And unmanaged solutions bring their own risks.

"You can't just sink boreholes everywhere," Winde warns. "In dry seasons, too many boreholes drop the water table - and that creates another crisis."

The province has launched the Western Cape Water Resilience Strategy 2025–2035 - a framework designed to secure supply while supporting long-term growth. It's a coordination tool used through the Integrated Energy and Water Council, where government, municipalities and business assess risk together.

"We realised energy was one systemic risk," Winde says. "Water was the next one. Our job as a province is coordination and understanding risk — even where we don't have direct responsibility."

Key priorities include:

- Reducing water losses across municipal systems
- Enforcing demand management without killing economic activity
- Increasing private sector participation in resilience infrastructure

Continued on P2

Seawater batteries for South Africa grid storage



By Kris van der Bijl

SEAWATER battery technology is still largely unproven at utility scale. But with 2026 peak tariff increases fast approaching, the Western Cape's 31.7GW energy pipeline is already reshaping itself - favouring hybrid storage configurations as a financial and operational hedge against rising energy costs.

Seawater batteries offer a potential promise of being safer, cheaper, and free from expensive imported metals like cobalt.

They can use abundant seawater as an electrolyte, with sodium or chloride ions facilitating charge and discharge.

For investors and local manufacturers, seawater batteries represent a chance to participate in a growing market while supporting South Africa's energy transition by adding new technology.

Seawater batteries as a cobalt-free solution

More traditional batteries favour raw materials like cobalt and lithium.

Cobalt is a major contributor to the cost and environmental footprint of lithium batteries.

Its supply is geographically concentrated, with roughly 70% of it coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is a supply chain, according to Oluwole Ojewale of the ISS Africa, entrenched in crime.

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Water insecurity a business risk in the Western Cape, says Alan Winde

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- Faster approval processes for water-efficient developments

Agriculture: mitigation, not immunity

Agriculture remains uniquely exposed. When dams run dry, irrigation stops — and there's no easy work-around at scale.

But the sector has

adapted aggressively: satellite-based irrigation management, biomass monitoring, shade netting and precision water application are now standard practice on commercial farms.

"They probably understand water better than most sectors," Winde says. "They mitigate risk where they can, but it's obviously harder."

What's expected from business

Environmental approvals are tightening. New developments, like Amazon's recent Western Cape investment, are going beyond compliance with water capture, recycling and biodiversity protection built into project design.

"Big water users are businesses, factories,

golf courses, data centres," Winde says. "The question is: how do we reduce net demand through recycling and closed systems?"

The government wants business as a partner, not just a consumer.

The next six weeks are critical

Dam levels are falling. The key risk now is how

low they go before winter rains arrive.

"If we reach April at 30% instead of 40%, next year is a very different ball game," Winde says.

His message to businesses in the Western Cape is direct: "Responsible partnership. It's about your own longevity. Together, let's make sure we get through this risk."

RLabs BPO aims to turn township jobs into social impact

By Staff Writer

IN a bid to create a sustainable revenue stream for its social impact work, RLabs is launching a business process outsourcing (BPO) venture in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, with the ambitious goal of creating 1,500 jobs within 18 months.

The move is part of a strategy to reduce reliance on grant funding and commercial consulting work by building an owned asset that can fund the organisation's sprawling entrepreneurship and training programmes across South Africa and the continent.

"If we get this BPO thing right, it will sustain our labs as long as that BPO is running. It will fully sustain all our operations in South Africa," said RLabs founder Marlon Parker.

The opportunity fell into RLabs' lap. The space, in a building owned by the government's small business finance agency SEFA

and based close to the group's campus in Mitchells Plain, was previously occupied by a nightclub that was "causing problems." When the previous tenant left, RLabs negotiated with the landlord to repurpose it.

The model relies on stitching together a network of partnerships to minimise upfront costs. The Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), which funded the main RLabs campus, agreed to fund the renovations for the BPO facility into a call centre.

Telecommunications provider Vumatel has committed to providing high-speed internet through its existing infrastructure in the area.

RLabs is also leveraging its own investment portfolio. One of its companies, a security firm, will handle site security. Another, the ride-hailing service Loop Taxi, an early RLabs investment, will solve the critical transport challenge for call centre agents.

Aside from supporting businesses, it also



offers a wide range of training courses, enabling it to have a considerable reach when it comes to recruiting call center agents.

"We've got all the pieces now," Parker said. "We train people for BPO. We've got a huge database of people. The only thing that we need to find right now is just to get a client or two or three."

This remains the core challenge. The BPO sector is highly competitive, dominated by established players like Transac-

tion Capital's Nutun. Parker is banking on RLabs' community roots and existing training pipeline to attract clients, with initial outreach focused on the UK market.

The rollout is phased. The first 200-seater phase is set to open in June, with subsequent expansions planned through the year. The ultimate target is to become the largest employer in the area, with 1,600 to 1,700 staff.

For Parker, the BPO is more than a busi-

ness; it's pragmatic infrastructure for impact. The revenue generated from what he hopes will be a "cash cow" will allow RLabs to experiment freely with other community-focused initiatives without the constant pressure of fundraising.

"The quickest way to get a client is you must be set up," he said.

"So that is why we're going to leverage our existing infrastructure... set up a space, and then we're just going to go and sell."

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Early harvest brings opportunities and challenges for SA fruit growers

SOUTH Africa's apple and pear season has started up to ten days earlier than usual, driven by consistently warm weather during November and December. However, recent hailstorms in the Langkloof and Koue Bokkeveld regions have raised concerns about potential crop damage.

Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing picked its first BigBucks Gala apples on 26 January in Ceres, ten days ahead of last season. The company's Rosemarie pear har-

vest began on 23 December, two to three weeks earlier than normal and only the second time in 25 years that harvesting started before Christmas.

"The crop is progressing well and quality indicators are encouraging, but there are still variables that will influence market performance," said Roelf Pienaar, managing director at Tru-Cape Fruit.

The early start creates opportunities in international markets,

particularly the Middle East, India, Russia and China. New Zealand's delayed Royal Gala harvest should benefit South African exports to the Far East.

Water management remains critical after the Langkloof's summer rainfall failed to materialise, forcing farmers to prioritise irrigation and resulting in smaller fruit sizes. While last week's storm brought relief, it came too late to improve fruit dimensions.

Logistical challenges

and rand strength pose ongoing concerns for exporters.

"Productivity at the Port of Cape Town must improve," said Calla du Toit, procurement director at Tru-Cape. "We continue to engage at all levels to help improve the situation."

Industry upgrades at Two-a-Day and Ceres Fruit Growers pack-houses aim to capitalise on growing summer pear volumes and new varieties entering the market.

AfCFTA exports surge 186% as digital trade unlocks africa



By Adrian Ephraim

SOUTH Africa's exports under the African Continental Free Trade Area surged from R485 million in 2024 to R1.386 billion in the first seven months of 2025, marking a 186% increase that signals a fundamental shift in the country's trade strategy beyond traditional Southern African markets.

The breakthrough came as 24 African countries began trading preferentially under AfCFTA, with intra-African trade climbing to \$220.3 billion in 2024 - a 12.4% year-on-year increase, according to Afreximbank's African Trade Report released in January 2026.

Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition Parks Tau confirmed South Africa's export figures while briefing Parliament on the country's evolving trade landscape amid global economic turbulence.

Rules of origin unlock new markets

A critical milestone arrived in October 2025 when Egypt, chairing the AfCFTA Ministerial Council, brokered consensus on long-pending rules of origin for the textile, apparel, and automotive sectors after more than four years of negotiations. This breakthrough provides South African manufacturers with clarity on qualifying products for preferential treatment across 13 non-

SADC markets, including Egypt, Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, Cameroon, and Algeria.

The agreement on 92.3% of rules of origin, accounting for 95.5% of intra-African trade value, establishes the framework needed for South African exporters to access a combined market of 1.5 billion people with a GDP approaching \$3.4 trillion. For the automotive and textile sectors - previously stalled in negotiations - the transitional implementation mechanism now offers manufacturers a roadmap for continental expansion.

Deputy Minister Andrew Whitfield said South Africa's AfCFTA exports included diverse products: mining equipment, appliances, food items, apparel, plastics, and electrical machinery, with main export destinations including Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, Rwanda, Cameroon, and Algeria.

Digital revolution accelerates integration

In a game-changing development unveiled in Johannesburg in November 2025, the AfCFTA Secretariat launched the African Digital Adaptation Platform for Trade (ADAPT) - a blockchain-based digital infrastructure designed to replace the continent's fragmented, paper-based trade systems. The platform, developed with the IOTA Foundation, Tony Blair Institute, and World Economic Forum, aims to double intra-African trade by 2035.

Official modelling suggests ADAPT could generate approximately \$23.6 billion in annual efficiency gains and unlock over \$70 billion in additional trade value annually by cutting border clearance times by more than 50%. The platform is currently operational in Kenya and Ghana, with expansion to all AfCFTA member states planned from 2026 onward.

Butterfly strategy targets R3-trillion

Against this backdrop, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition has unveiled its "Butterfly Strategy" - a multi-market diversification approach positioning AfCFTA as the body of the butterfly, with trade wings extending westward across the Atlantic and eastward across the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Deputy Minister Zuko Godlimpi, unveiling the strategy at the South African Export Symposium in October 2025, described AfCFTA as "the single most significant opportunity of a generation." The strategy aims to grow South Africa's exports from R2 trillion to R3 trillion by 2029/30, supporting a sustained 3% GDP growth target.

AGOA uncertainty creates urgency

The September 30, 2025, expiration of the African Growth and Opportunity Act without Congressional renewal has intensified

South Africa's pivot toward AfCFTA markets. The US Congress moved in December 2025 to revive AGOA with a three-year extension, but South Africa's participation remains uncertain. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told a Senate hearing he would be "open" to excluding South Africa, calling the country "a unique problem." Paradoxically, South Africa's exports to the US jumped 37% over the first ten months of 2025 - from R12.4 billion in January to R17 billion in October - despite facing 30% US tariffs imposed in August, according to SARS data released in December 2025.

China's dominance reshapes trade

Complicating South Africa's trade recalibration is China's position as the country's largest trading partner since 2008. Bilateral trade reached \$34 billion in 2023, with South Africa becoming China's biggest market in Africa. China's December 2024 elimination of tariffs on imports from 33 African countries strengthens its continental footprint precisely as US-Africa trade relations face uncertainty.

Industry bodies, including the Automotive Industry Export Council and National Association of Automobile Manufacturers, now face the challenge of navigating simultaneous opportunities - AfCFTA's expanding preferential markets enhanced by digital infrastructure - and threats from US tariff uncertainty and Chinese competition.

As 2026 begins, the World Bank forecasts South Africa's GDP growth accelerating from 0.9% in 2025 to 1.2% in 2026, with deeper AfCFTA integration identified as a key growth driver. As Minister Tau noted, "We celebrate the rise of South African value-added exports under AfCFTA, but this is just the beginning.

Can SA take advantage of shifting global tides?

By Chris Hattingsh

The latest World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, produced a stark, necessary contrast between two emerging philosophies of foreign policy and of geo-economic strategy.

On the one hand, Canadian prime minister Mark Carney's address drew widespread praise. He expressed concerns about the decline of the rules-based order, and the need for "middle powers" (including South Africa) to work together to fill the emerging gaps in a positive manner.

By contrast with Mr Carney's speech, US President Donald Trump struck a decidedly America First tone, hyping his administration's achievements in his second term, and painting in stark images the US' economic and regional strategic ambitions. Thus, the two paths presented to the world are multilateralism versus unilateralism.

"Markets have already rewarded the government's better fiscal path over the last 24 months, with the declining yield on government bonds also boosting appetite for South African debt and assets."

In this maelstrom of geopolitical and geoeconomic changes South Africa finds itself hopeful for 1.4% GDP growth in 2026 (tripling the growth rate from 2024). The Government of National Unity remains relatively stable, the lights stay on most of the time (not for very many citizens), but better than in 2023 and into 2024. There's talk of reform, but most South Africans are not yet seeing it in reality. A key question is whether the country's economic improvement is due to domestic factors and those reforms, or more the consequence of higher gold and com-



modities prices, the consequence of heightened global uncertainty and a weakening US Dollar.

The upcoming State of the Nation address by President Cyril Ramaphosa, set to be delivered on 12 February, and the main Budget, scheduled to be delivered by Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana, will be watched for 1) the country vision the president offers to citizens and 2) how well the government is managing its finances. On the former, the president faces a serious struggle; ever more citizens have become disinterested (at best) and completely disengaged with South African democracy and the political options available.

Regarding the latter, markets and investors will watch to see whether the government can manage its relatively more responsible spending path, while still investing in infrastructure, the social wage, and other priorities where needed. Markets have already rewarded the government's better fiscal path over the last 24 months, with the declining yield on government bonds also boosting appetite for South African debt and assets.

In both the SONA and Budget the main,

most impactful take-away will be how the South African government sees and is willing to act to shore up the country's weaknesses and build on strengths. Doing so would require some radical introspection and honesty; not flowery rhetoric, many adjectives, commitments, and promises, and the usual script to which South Africans are subjected.

Regardless of whether the Carney-ian or Trumpian vision and path ultimately plays out, South Africa will be able to better weather coming storms through improved economic activity, investment, and output, and the rebuilding of strategic enablers such as the South African National Defence Force (especially of the navy).

In his World Economic Forum address Mr Carney leaned on insights from Václav Havel. The latter's hallmark was "living in truth." South Africa's leaders, policymakers, politicians and intellectuals will do the citizens no favours if they persist with feel-good speeches and indulgences, instead of the politically difficult but ultimately necessary decisions and reforms that would place the economy on a healthier path.

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turers have struggled with incomplete inventory data. Traditional wired measurement systems were costly to install, required fixed power sources and left remote assets unmonitored.

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the VEGAPULS Air series: fully autonomous radar sensors built for decentralised logistics. Powered by high-performance 80 GHz radar technology, they deliver millimetre-accurate measurements and wireless data transmission while operating for up to 10 years on a single battery.

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A pragmatic path to digitalisation

Large-scale IoT projects often fail when implemented too broadly or too quickly. VEGA's modular approach offers a more practical alternative.

"Successful IoT integration happens step by step," explains VEGA's product manager for digital solutions. "It starts with reliable measurement data, then connects that data to software that creates value."

Companies can begin by deploying VEGAPULS Air sensors linked to the VEGA Inventory System, a cloud-based platform that visualises stock levels, calculates optimal order quantities and can automatically trigger purchase orders in ERP systems such as SAP. Each stage delivers clear efficiency gains while laying the groundwork for deeper automation.

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As industries continue to digitalise, VEGA's self-sufficient sensors offer a practical, scalable foundation for building smarter, more sustainable logistics operations — one step at a time.

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Africa's growth story is shifting. Smart logistics will shape what comes next.



By Nelson Teixeira
MD Operations
Sub-Saharan Africa

South Africa and the African continent are standing at a defining moment, as global trade patterns shift and digital commerce accelerates. New industries are taking root across the continent, and the speed at which goods move across borders—via strong networks and efficient logistics—will be a decisive driver of Africa's future competitiveness. As supply chains stretch across borders and industries become more interconnected, the ability to move goods seamlessly from local hubs to global markets is one of the most important drivers of Africa's future competitiveness.

As the cricket season continues at full speed this month, it is clear how sports can energise communities and stimulate economic activity, demonstrating how the right systems, infrastructure, and coordination can uplift commerce and a nation. The same is true for logistics.

Sport carries real economic weight. Globally, the sports industry contributes over US \$700 billion annually, roughly 1% of global GDP, underscoring how sport can drive investment and national visibility. The 2024 Cricket World Cup generated \$1.6 billion in revenue, showing the power to unite people and economies across the globe.

In South Africa, major sporting events have played a profound role in uniting citizens on the path toward true democracy and reconciliation. That potential to uplift people and economies is exactly why our collaboration with the Joburg Super Kings (JSK) matters beyond the pitch. What sport can do socially and economically, a robust logistics infrastructure can do for trade. Improvements in infrastructure and logistics performance strongly correlate with improved economic growth outcomes, especially when accompanied by increased trade activity.

Smart logistics has a direct economic impact. The FedEx FY25 Global Economic Impact Report notes that our worldwide operations contributed US\$126 billion in direct and indirect value, with approximately US\$1.6 billion coming from the MEISA region, which includes much of Africa. The FedEx network connects South African businesses to more than 220 countries and territories, offering a gateway for companies of every size to participate in global trade. As the continent looks toward deeper economic integration and export growth, this kind of access is critical.

South Africa's freight and logistics sector reflects this momentum. Currently valued at USD 14.7 billion, it is projected to grow at over 6% annually by 2030. Demand

for efficient, technology-enabled logistics will only rise as e-commerce expands and manufacturing picks up. However, many businesses still face fragmented supply chains, with different providers handling different parts of a shipment. This introduces delays and increased costs, threatening businesses' reliability.

A one-stop logistics model simplifies this complexity. At FedEx, every stage from pick up to customs clearance and final delivery is connected through a single, integrated network. For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), this shift is transformative. Growing businesses often lack the resources to manage multiple logistics partners or navigate the intricacies of cross-border documentation. Our digital tools and trade enablement solutions help SMEs access global customers with greater knowledge at competitive rates. This is especially meaningful in South Africa, where SMEs play a crucial role in employment and economic inclusion.

But logistics is not only about small packages. Many of the industries that underpin South Africa's economic engine, such as mining, engineering, and manufacturing, rely on heavy freight. These sectors move equipment that is high-value and technically complex. Freight remains the largest share of South Africa's logistics market, underscoring the magnitude of this need. FedEx supports these industries with freight capabilities designed for shipments well above 68 kilograms, enabling large-scale projects to run on schedule and unlocking trade flows that fuel economic growth.

The importance of logistics is even more profound in healthcare. As Africa strengthens its capacity to modernise medical technology, the movement of tem-

perature-sensitive and time-critical supplies becomes an essential part of health system resilience. FedEx provides specialised handling, cold-chain stability, and end-to-end monitoring required to protect sensitive healthcare shipments. In this case, future-ready logistics safeguard lives and push the economy forward.

These capabilities form the foundation on which Africa's economic aspirations can be realised. A resilient logistics ecosystem enables businesses to expand with confidence and strengthen industrial capacity. When these systems function well, communities gain access to opportunity. The potential of young people, entrepreneurs, and industries can be shared with the world. In this way, logistics has the power to act as a catalyst for broader social and fiscal progress.

This understanding is at the core of our JSK collaboration. Sport and logistics belong to different worlds, but they share essential values of discipline, coordination, and readiness. Both demonstrate what becomes possible when people and systems work toward a common goal. A team's ability to perform well depends on many of the same principles that allow a business to compete globally.

The passion shown on the pitch this season is a direct reflection of our belief that excellence, whether in a supply chain or on the field, can spark inspiration and open new pathways for growth across the continent. At FedEx, we are committed to expanding our footprint in Sub-Saharan Africa, advancing our capabilities, and supporting the businesses that drive the country forward. Every shipment reflects our belief in this market's potential.

When logistics work, everything moves, providing endless possibilities.

Rental uptake soars as operations choose flexible heavy equipment solutions



HEAVY Lift, a division of CFAO Equipment, reports that 95% of its business over the past 12 months emanated from equipment rentals, highlighting a strong industry trend toward flexible, capital-efficient alternatives to owning heavy-lifting machinery.

The growth of heavy equipment rental is no coincidence. Behind it is a mix of financial efficiency, operational flexibility, technological access and maintenance support that purchasing simply cannot match.

Heavy Lift National Product Specialist, Lenny Naidoo, says renting heavy lift equipment has become increasingly attractive as businesses look to avoid the complexity and cost of sourcing machinery themselves. "Nine out of ten rentals require that equipment be ordered from factories in Sweden or China, with lead times ranging from a few weeks to seven months."

Each unit undergoes full assembly and live testing at the factory before being stripped for shipping.

Heavy Lift then manages the transport and final assembly, ensuring customers re-

ceive fully operational units without logistical burdens.

Long-term rental options, typically 36, 60 or 72 months, allow customers to secure fixed rates while maintaining the ability to upgrade, modernise or downscale at the end of the contract period. Short-term rentals, from one to 24 months, remain in high demand, particularly for 16- and 18-ton forklifts which form the core of Heavy Lift's short-term fleet.

"With new equipment requiring a large up-front investment, rental provides customers with predictable cost management and the freedom to adjust their fleets as business conditions change," says Naidoo.

All rental agreements include a comprehensive maintenance contract. Heavy Lift performs full inspections before delivery and again with the customer when the contract concludes. Equipment is serviced every 250 hours or every three months, ensuring safety, performance and minimal downtime, even during quieter operational periods.

Rental customers benefit from access to

the latest lifting technologies. At contract renewal, businesses can upgrade to more advanced models or update their existing units, staying current without major upfront investment.

As many depots move away from keeping idle equipment on-site, rental provides a more sustainable approach to asset management. Companies can scale their fleet up or down based on workload, improving capital efficiency and reducing unused equipment.

Naidoo says rental demand remains steady throughout the year because it reflects how customers operate. "When workloads increase, they can scale up quickly. When business slows, they can avoid the financial burden of owning costly machinery."

For companies operating in sectors such as container handling, warehousing and industrial logistics, the case for rental has never been stronger. As industries continue to navigate shifting logistics demands, renting heavy lift equipment has emerged as not only a cost-effective choice but a strategic one.

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David Neale, founder of accreditation specialist GBPO Solutions,

New research underlines the importance of accredited BPO providers

FOLLOWING the release of new research, a leading industry expert has called on BPO providers to be more transparent to help potential customers understand the complexity of the sector.

David Neale, founder of accreditation

specialist GBPO Solutions, raised concerns after latest industry research showed that 75% of those looking for an outsourcing partner are failing to buy into BPO sales teams.

The findings, released by industry

analysts Ryan Strategic Advisory, also highlight that 94% of companies are more likely to choose an accredited BPO provider. And 84% are keen to use industry specialists to help them navigate the complexity of a partnership choice if

they knew commission wasn't being received from the BPO.

David Neale from GBPO Solutions said: "This latest research undertaken across five key markets, including the UK, USA, Canada, Germany and Australia shows some

staggering results, and that across several areas, the BPO industry needs to think differently when it comes to client attraction.

"It's a shock to the market that two thirds of businesses simply aren't trusting target-driven BPO sales teams or commission focused brokers and that's a big red flag however you look at it. It's clear that over-zealous practices are creating mistrust which is hampering the industry's reputation.

"What businesses are saying is loud and clear – they crave authentic BPO partnerships with companies who are accredited and they can therefore trust the BPO's credentials across important areas including policies, processes, people and technology. It's a big decision for businesses to outsource so it's vital that they have full confidence in their partner.

"Overall, this latest research should be the moment that many BPOs hit the reset button."

"The research clearly shows that trust and transparency are far more important than experience and price. The sector must not forget that clients are risking their brand, reputation, performance and customers - price is secondary to their most valuable assets.

"Overall, this latest research should be the moment that many BPOs hit the reset button. It's a wake up call and the market clearly wants to partner differently with BPOs, and ones who are independently assessed.

"The great news is that as the demand for accredited BPOs grows, increasingly BPOs are waking up to the industry change and becoming accredited with a healthy variety of choices for clients in different countries and capabilities. South Africa is leading the way boasting the largest number of Accredited members last year."

Readers and organisations looking for further information, can email David Neale through davidneale@gbpsolutions.com, or through WhatsApp on +447807032410.

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SEW-EURODRIVE's service and repair centre's capabilities includes sandblasting, spray painting, oil recycling, product stripping and load-testing.



We have introduced the in-house manufacturing of baseplates and guards, drop-in solutions, light engineering and 3D scanning.



Our motor repairs division will allow for motor assembly and rewinding, curing burnout ovens and rotor balancing



DRIVING SERVICE AND REPAIR. DRIVING AFRICA. DRIVING THE WORLD

ELECTRA Mining Africa adds new outside exhibit area, showcasing top OEMs and leading component suppliers



SOUTH AFRICA'S mining, power, electrical, automation, industrial, transport, and manufacturing sectors are the engine of the nation's economy. Together, they drive growth, create jobs, and turn raw materials into value-added products that fuel trade and exports.

outside," says Hefer. "There will be more original-equipment manufacturers than at previous shows and this level of representation will be of benefit to visitors interested in this particular sector as they are able to view, compare and evaluate the offerings

ing productivity and innovation. Complementing them are distributors, technology partners, and component and service suppliers such as Barloworld, Egelquip, GHM Machinery, Drilling Mining and Construction, Kappa Engineering, Alpin, and nVolve Solutions, which provide equipment support, automation technologies, parts, systems, and engineering services that enhance OEM performance and operational reliability. Together, this diverse mix ensures a comprehensive showcase of the mining and industrial ecosystem—from original manufacture through to digital integration, distribution, maintenance, and operational excellence.

dustry support for the show and confirming its proven track record as a driver of leads and sales.

Taking place in Nasrec, Johannesburg between 7-11 September 2026, Electra Mining Africa is a 6-in-1 Trade Show, incorporating Electra Mining Africa, Automation Expo, Elenex Africa, PowerEx, Transport Expo and the Local Southern African Manufacturing Expo. It is the largest show of its kind in Southern Africa, and one of the largest mining and industrial shows globally.

"We are really excited about Electra Mining Africa 2026," says Hefer. "The 2024 event was the biggest ever show since the inaugural edition in

"The biennial show is set to unveil several exciting additions in 2026, among them, a new outside exhibit area located in the Arena at the Expo Centre."

Electra Mining Africa brings all these industries together in one dynamic trade show, offering a platform for buyers, sellers, and decision-makers to connect, explore innovations, and forge partnerships. With in-person networking and cutting-edge exhibitor content, Electra Mining Africa is where industry collaboration meets business growth.

The biennial show is set to unveil several exciting additions in 2026, among them, a new outside exhibit area located in the Arena at the Expo Centre. According to Montgomery Group Africa portfolio director Charlene Hefer, the introduction of the new Orange Zone comes in direct response to exhibitor demand.

"The new Orange Zone provides the additional space needed to accommodate more companies that want to showcase their equipment and innovations

all in one place. The Orange Zone complements the existing Red, Blue, Green, and Yellow Zones, creating an even more dynamic outdoor showcase."

Exhibitors located in the outside exhibit areas will span the full mining and industrial equipment value chain - from global and local OEMs to leading component and service providers. Major OEMs such as South African heavy equipment manufacturer Bell Equipment, global mining and construction machinery OEM Komatsu, mining equipment and tools OEM Sandvik, drilling, global construction and mining OEM Sany, mining machinery OEM Eickhoff, specialist manufacturer/supplier OEM All Terrain Mining & Tunnelling Machinery, and Shantui (represented by Everstar Industries) will be at the show with complete machinery and technology solutions driv-

"Taking place in Nasrec, Johannesburg between 7-11 September 2026, Electra Mining Africa is a 6-in-1 Trade Show, incorporating Electra Mining Africa, Automation Expo, Elenex Africa, PowerEx, Transport Expo and the Local Southern African Manufacturing Expo."

"The presence of these industry leaders will attract high-level buyers, engineers, and decision-makers seeking reliable, high-performance solutions, while also fostering partnerships, local manufacturing, and skills development," notes Hefer.

With just under eight months to go until Electra Mining Africa 2026, the exhibition is already 98% sold, demonstrating strong in-

1972, hosting 950 exhibitors across 6 exhibition halls and 4 outside exhibit areas, with almost 40 000 visitors attending. Now, with the addition of the Orange Zone, a new SAIMECH Career and Skills Hub, and other exciting initiatives, Electra Mining Africa 2026 is set to be even bigger".

For more information, visit www.electramining.co.za

The February energy dip

Why even the best strategies fail when leaders are depleted

IT's February and I am observing a costly disconnect in many organisations.

The strategy was signed off on last year. The goals were clearly defined last year. The plans were approved last year. And yet momentum stalls.

Energy dips. Decision-making slows. Leaders begin reacting instead of responding. Patience thins. Execution becomes stop-start, with very little follow-through.

The domino effect is predictable. Low energy leads to inconsistent execution, which in turn further drains energy. Frustration builds as leaders realise that much of the first quarter has already slipped by, yet they feel stuck on the back foot, without the capacity to regain momentum.

This is not a capability problem.

It is an energy deficit that quietly sabotages leadership effectiveness.

Energy is a strategic asset, not a wellness issue

In South Africa, the year does not ease gently. The January "holiday buffer" ends abruptly, followed by a sharp cortisol spike as families return to full operational mode. Schools reopen, routines restart, and work accelerates immediately.

By February, many leaders are already depleted.

This matters because energy underpins every strategic behaviour leaders are expected to demonstrate:

- clear thinking & judgement
- emotional regulation
- ability to influence

When energy is low, these capabilities are compromised, regardless of experience or intent.

Simply put, you cannot out-strategise a depleted nervous system.

What is really happening in February

The February slump is not imaginary. It is biological and cognitive.

By this point in the year, many leaders have:

- pushed hard through year-end
- had minimal genuine recovery

- launched the new year at full speed
- slipped back into long hours and constant availability

Sustained pressure without adequate recovery elevates cortisol, narrows attention, and reduces cognitive flexibility. Decision-making becomes more reactive. Emotional tolerance drops. Perspective shrinks.

Leaders do not suddenly become worse at their jobs. Their capacity is compromised.

CAN DO leaders manage energy before they manage people

The most effective adaptive leaders I work with understand a simple but powerful truth.

Self-management comes before people management.

Within the CAN DO Adaptive Leadership framework, sustainable performance is anchored in three human capacities: Mental Clarity, Emotional Agility, and Physical Nexus.

These leaders do not wait for exhaustion to force a reset. They proactively manage their energy as a leadership priority.

This is not self-indulgence. It is self-leadership.

Let's remember that energy is contagious, and in BOTH directions.

The energy trifecta: simple, not easy

Restoring leadership energy does not require complex bio-hacks or a 'wellness day'.

The 7-day energy trifecta - done CONSISTENTLY wins the day. These are not lifestyle tips. They are performance levers.

1. Eat real food

More natural. Less from factories.

2. Sleep consistently

Seven hours per night. "Catch-up sleep" on weekends doesn't help ...your brain.

3. Daily movement

Twenty minutes per day is enough. Done consistently - it is like compound interest. Another 'wonder' in the world.



Small shifts, big ripple effects

Leaders often ask, "Will this really make a difference at work?"

Yes, immediately. When energy stabilises:

- focus improves
- reactivity decreases
- creativity returns

This is how leaders move from coping to capable.

The February leadership question

If February feels harder than it "should," resist the urge to push harder.

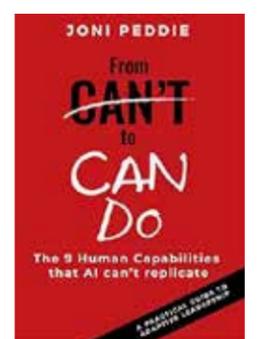
Ask a better question instead: What state am I leading from? Because strategy is only as effective as the energy behind it.

The leadership energy gap is not solved in boardrooms or spreadsheets. It is closed through daily choices that protect and restore the human system leading.

If your leaders are operating on empty, no strategy will compensate.

The CAN DO Adaptive Leadership framework helps leaders restore clarity, agility, and sustainable energy so that your business strategy gets executed.

Joni Peddie is the author of **From CAN'T to CAN DO: 9 Human Capabilities AI Can't Replicate**, available at *Exclusive Books*. She works with leaders and organisations to build adaptive capacity in fast-changing environments.



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Addressing the social impact of deindustrialisation in South Africa



Mervyn Naidoo, CEO of ACTOM.

SOUTH Africa's metals and engineering sector is facing a crisis of historic proportions, as years of low capital expenditure, declining demand, and policy gaps have accelerated deindustrialisation, eroding the country's productive base.

The consequences are stark, with ArcelorMittal's retrenchment of nearly 4,000 workers – half its local workforce – illustrating the scale of the challenge. According to the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa (Seifsa), projections indicate up to 293,000 direct and indirect job losses over the next five years if current trends persist.

This is not simply an economic issue. The persistently high unemployment rate of 31.9% translates into hardship for workers, families and entire communities. Poverty deepens, inequality widens, and the burden on state resources grows heavier. Reversing deindustrialisation is both an economic necessity and a social imperative.

China's approach, to support local manufacturers and encourage automation and efficiency

The social consequences of industrial decline

Mervyn Naidoo, CEO of ACTOM, explains that deindustrialisation has a cascading effect on society. Job losses in the metals and engineering sector ripple outward, affecting suppliers, service providers and local economies. Communities built around industrial hubs face declining living standards, reduced tax bases and weakened social cohesion.

"When people are unemployed, the social burden falls back on the state. We need to take away from that burden by creating jobs through industry revitalisation. The projections are alarming. If we don't act, nearly 300,000 jobs could be lost. That is not just an economic statistic; it's families, communities and futures at stake," he says.

Learning from global examples

China's experience offers a powerful counterpoint. Over the past 30 years, China has increased its GDP per capita tenfold, largely through sustained infrastructure investment and deliberate industrial policy. By contrast, Africa's GDP per capita has barely doubled over the same period.

"China used infrastructure spending to maximise industrialisation, and that's what created jobs. If we want to replicate that success, we need policies that support capital spend and localisation," says Naidoo.

Policy reforms for sustainable job creation

"There is a policy void that allows imports to bypass obligations. If companies fail to meet their local content commitments, they should face consequences, up to blacklisting. Without enforcement, policy intent is meaningless," notes Tafadzwa Chibanguza, CEO of Seifsa.

To reverse deindustrialisation, South Africa must realign its policies with industrial priorities. Key reforms include:

- Enforcing localisation regulations: ensuring that steel, transformers and other critical inputs are manufactured domestically
- Tightening import duties: preventing the dumping of surplus foreign stock that undermines local producers
- Strengthening NIPP enforcement: holding contractors accountable for local investment obligations
- Providing targeted incentives: grants and subsidies, similar to

China's approach, to support local manufacturers and encourage automation and efficiency

Partnerships for inclusive growth

Reindustrialisation cannot be achieved by the government alone. Partnerships between government, industry and labour are essential to rebuild competitiveness and ensure social inclusion.

"If projects are happening in the country, we have to enforce that the steel or products are manufactured here. That's how you increase employment, grow the tax base and reduce the social burden," says Chibanguza.

Building local capacity and infrastructure

Investment in local capacity is central to restoring competitiveness. ACTOM's initiatives in Pretoria and Wadeville demonstrate how building domestic production capability can meet the demands of large-scale projects such as the Transmission Development Plan (TDP) and independent power producers (IPPs).

"As we ramp up on the TDP and IPP, we need to build capacity so the local industry can fulfil these needs. Economies of scale and automation are critical to achieving

social stability," says Naidoo.

However, reindustrialisation must also be inclusive. Subsidising companies to expand capacity, even at a premium, can reduce unemployment and ease the state's social burden. The economic multiplier effect of this intervention far exceeds the premium, yielding a net positive outcome for the country.

"At the end of the day, investing in local industry is investing in people. It's about dignity, opportunity and building a future where growth is shared," adds Chibanguza.

A social and economic imperative

The decline of South Africa's metals and engineering sector is not inevitable. With targeted policy reforms, investment in local capacity and strong partnerships, the country can reverse deindustrialisation.

The stakes are high. Without action, hundreds of thousands of jobs will be lost, deepening poverty and inequality. With action, South Africa can rebuild competitiveness, increase GDP per capita and lay the foundation for inclusive growth.

"Reindustrialisation is not just about economics; it is about improving lives. We must act now. Reindustrialisation is the only path to sustainable growth and social stability," concludes Naidoo.

THE BOTTOM LINE



Godongwana Budget 2026 tests South Africa's economic recovery

The finance minister faces his 2026 budget with an improving economic backdrop, but unlocking private sector investment remains the final hurdle.

WHEN Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana delivers his national budget speech this month, he will do so from a position of strength for the first time since taking charge.

Godongwana has not had an easy stint since taking the job in August 2021. He had to find a way forward after the pandemic brought the economy to a standstill. While the global economy went on to make a recovery, the South African economy has dodged along, growing at less than 1% a year.

This stagnant growth weighed on the government's ability to make ends meet, and Godongwana surprised everyone last year, including his cabinet partners in the Government of National Unity, with an unexpected VAT increase.

In the end, the minister did not have the votes to pass his budget in Parliament. And it took not once, not twice, but three times to get it passed.

This time it's different. Since he presented his mini-budget in November 2025, there has been talk about an upswing in the economy, propelled by the reduction in the inflation target to 3%, the removal of South Africa from the European Union's money laundering monitoring "grey list," and the upgrading of its sovereign credit rating by S&P.

Aside from these events, the country has also made progress in pushing through much-needed structural reforms. The electricity grid is stable, and more privately owned generation capacity has been added. The power sector also received a boost from the electricity regulator Nersa approving the Market Operator licence for the National Transmission Company of South Africa (NTCSA).

In freight logistics, the

signing of the long-term concession agreement for Durban Container Terminal Pier 2 has unlocked investment in port capacity and technology. The private sector has also been brought in to operate trains on the freight rail network.

Entry to the country has been simplified through the new Electronic Travel Authorisation system, which allows for digital visa processing and faster approvals. Tourism received a boost from the establishment of the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme, facilitating significant growth in group tourism from China and India.

But even with the economic tide supporting Godongwana, he can't claim victory just yet.

According to the South African Reserve Bank, non-bank companies are holding R1.8 trillion in bank accounts. So it stands to reason that if businesses were confident, they would likely use these resources to invest and expand.

So far, there are a few signs of this. Gross fixed capital formation — which measures investment in productive assets like machinery, buildings, and infrastructure — declined by 1.7% in the first quarter of 2025, according to Stats SA. However, as this data is a lagging indicator, investment may have increased since its release in September 2025.

Even so, the bottom line is that the economy is clearly out of ICU and is now either in high care or a general ward. For the country to be fully discharged, it must continue pressing ahead with Operation Vulindlela's reforms and also see Godongwana come up with a set of proposals that will give local businesses the confidence to invest in expansion.

What 2026 holds for African supply chains and the managers who shape them



AS 2026 gets underway, supply chain uncertainty shows no signs of abating. However, the conversation is changing tone, says the leading Southern African supply chain industry body SAPICS. After years defined by disruption and firefighting, the focus is shifting from survival to structure, and from reaction to strategy. For African and South African supply chains in particular, this transition brings both challenges and opportunities.

International research, including the Association for Supply Chain Management's (ASCM) 2026 supply

chain trends report, points to a future shaped by intelligent, resilient and data-driven operations. SAPICS notes that these themes take on distinct meaning on the African continent, where supply chains must operate amid infrastructure constraints, energy instability, geopolitical complexity and deep socioeconomic responsibility.

Over the past five years, supply chain leaders have operated in what many describe as a state of "permacrisis". Pandemic aftershocks, geopolitical conflict, climate events, port congestion, skills shortages and cost volatility forced

organisations into constant defensive mode.

In 2026, rather than reacting to each new shock, leading organisations are redesigning their supply chains to absorb disruption, adapt dynamically and create long-term value. "This is where South African and African supply chain managers, who have long had to build resilience into daily operations, may have a headstart," SAPICS notes.

AI has moved from pilot projects to core infrastructure. "By synthesising real-time information from across the supply chain—including

weather, ports, energy availability and market signals—AI enables faster, better-informed decisions," SAPICS explains. "Crucially, this is not about replacing people. It is about augmenting human judgement in environments where complexity is high and margins for error are low."

Automation and AI are taking over repetitive, transactional tasks, freeing professionals to focus on strategy, analysis and decision-making.

Supply chain managers must invest in new skills, including data literacy, systems thinking, scenario planning and cross-functional leadership. Building future-ready supply chains means developing local talent, creating sustainable jobs and ensuring technological advancement supports inclusive growth.

With changing global trade patterns, the "China + 1" strategy is evolving into a broader

"Anywhere-but-China" approach as organisations diversify sourcing and production to reduce risk, driving increased regionalisation. SAPICS says this trend presents a strategic opportunity for Africa.

For African supply chains, climate resilience is not abstract. Extreme weather events, water scarcity and energy instability already affect operations. In 2026, organisations that integrate sustainability into network design, sourcing and logistics will be better positioned to manage both risk and reputation.

Simultaneously, rather than blunt cost-cutting, leaders are adopting precision strategies that balance efficiency, resilience and sustainability. With 2026 shaping up to be a defining year for supply chains globally and particularly for Africa, SAPICS emphasises the importance of education and knowledge sharing.

Trade credit insurance: A strategic imperative

RECENT stories of cascading defaults, currency shocks and shifting compliance mandates highlight just how fragile and interconnected the modern trading environment has become. Against this backdrop, trade credit insurance has emerged as a strategic imperative, not just a safety net.

office function to a strategic priority. Trade credit insurance is a comprehensive business tool that supports informed decision-making, continuity planning and regulatory confidence.

Credit insurance strengthens risk management through access to credit in-

disciplined trading relationships.

Business continuity is another key advantage. Supply chains are increasingly interconnected, meaning the failure of one customer can have a ripple effect across an entire operation. By mitigating the financial impact of non-payment, trade credit insurance supports operational resilience and ensures businesses can withstand unexpected shocks. For exporters, this resilience is particularly important when navigating unfamiliar markets, currency volatility and political uncertainty.

Trade credit insurance also plays an important role in regulatory adherence and governance. South African companies operate within a framework that demands sound risk management, prudent financial controls and transparency. Credit insurance supports these requirements by formalising credit policies, improving receivables management and enhanc-

ing financial reporting. For businesses seeking funding, insured debtors are often viewed more favourably by banks, as insured receivables reduce lending risk and strengthen balance sheets.

As regulatory scrutiny increases and economic pressures persist, businesses are recognising that risk solutions must be integrated into their growth strategies. Trade credit insurance is no longer a defensive measure; it is an enabler of sustainable trade. It allows businesses to pursue opportunities, expand into new markets and build long-term partnerships without exposing themselves to unnecessary financial risk.

In a landscape where certainty is scarce, the ability to trade with confidence is a competitive advantage. Trade credit insurance, supported by strong risk solutions and regulatory alignment, provides businesses with assurance they need to move forward-secure-



"Trade credit insurance is no longer a defensive measure; it is an enabler of sustainable trade."

More than securing cash-flow in sectors where margins are tight and credit exposure is high, it now serves as a proactive business solution that empowers companies with real-time insights, continuity planning and regulatory confidence, ensuring they can trade with confidence even in an era defined by uncertainty. Risk management has shifted from a back-of-

telligence. Insurers continuously assess buyers, monitor market conditions and provide early warning signals when risks increase. This allows businesses to extend credit with confidence, avoid over-concentration, and respond proactively to deteriorating customer profiles. In practice, this intelligence often leads to stronger credit control processes and more

ly, strategically and sustainably.

In an increasingly uncertain economic environment, South African Businesses are under pressure to grow while protecting their balance sheets.

At its core, trade credit insurance stabilises cash flow. When a debtor defaults due to insolvency, protracted default or political risk in the case of export trade, the insured business is indemnified for

a significant portion of the loss. This protection enables companies to continue operating, meet financial obligations and reinvest in growth without the disruption that bad debt can cause.

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The end Of JIBAR and what ZARONIA means for SA



By Adrian Ephraim

FOR decades, the Johannesburg Interbank Average Rate (JIBAR) has sat at the heart of South Africa's financial system, shaping interest payments on loans, bonds, derivatives and mortgages. By the end of 2026, that anchor will be removed.

The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) has confirmed that JIBAR will cease after its final publication on 31 December 2026, marking one of the most significant financial market reforms in the country's history. In its place, markets are transitioning to the South African Rand Overnight Index Average — ZARONIA.

While the reform is regulatory in origin, its success depends on market execution. Standard Bank has emerged as a central player in that process, having issued South Africa's first ZARONIA-linked floating-rate bond — a transaction that effectively provided the market's first real pricing reference for the post-JIBAR era.

From concept to market reality

In 2025, Standard Bank issued a R100 million, three-year floating-rate note priced at ZARONIA plus 102 basis points. Though modest in size, the transaction was strategically important.

"The issuance provided the first live capital markets pricing reference for ZARONIA," says Ross Lindstrom of Standard Bank. "It allowed the market to test pricing, documentation and settlement under a new benchmark."

The deal followed confirmation that market infrastructure — including the JSE and Strate — was operationally ready to support ZARONIA-linked instruments. But readiness did not eliminate complexity.

Pricing a bond over a rate with limited historical depth required judgement, particularly in determining an appropriate credit spread without comparable issuances.

Documentation posed further challenges, with fallback provisions and interest calculation mechanics needing to align with evolving industry standards. The transaction ultimately demonstrated market readiness and established a reference point for future issuances.

Why JIBAR is being retired

JIBAR's replacement reflects structural change rather than failure.

Like LIBOR before it, JIBAR is based on submissions from banks estimating where they could borrow for specific tenors. Over time, the underlying interbank lending market has thinned, increasing reliance on judgement rather than observable transactions.

ZARONIA, by contrast, is a transaction-based overnight rate calculated from actual wholesale funding activity. It is backward-looking, more transparent and less susceptible to manipulation — attributes now required by global regulators.

The transition is being overseen by SARB in collaboration with the Market Practitioners Group (MPG), a cross-industry body representing banks, asset managers, corporates and infrastructure providers. Lindstrom chairs the MPG's Industry Transition Workstream, placing Standard Bank at the centre of coordination efforts.

A transition measured in trillions

The scale of the reform is vast. JIBAR underpins an estimated R43 trillion in domestic

exposures, with offshore contracts referencing South African interest rates pushing total exposure well beyond R100 trillion.

For Standard Bank, the transition spans loans, bonds, derivatives and structured products across hundreds of billions of rands. While granular figures are not disclosed, Lindstrom confirms the task involves a significant volume of contracts, products and systems.

Standard Bank has been preparing since 2022, drawing on lessons from the global LIBOR transition. As with LIBOR, the bank will continue to disclose its JIBAR-related exposure in its financial statements until cessation.

Operationally, the transition requires extensive systems upgrades, changes to risk and pricing models, amendments to legal documentation and close client engagement.

Legal and conduct risk

One of the most critical risks lies in legacy contracts that lack robust fallback provisions. Without clear language, contracts could default to unfavourable rates or trigger disputes when JIBAR ceases.

Standard Bank has undertaken a comprehensive contract inventory and risk segmentation exercise to identify and prioritise exposures requiring remediation.

"Where remediation is required, we favour proactive bilateral amendments," Lindstrom says. "That includes transparent engagement, clear explanations of credit adjustment spread methodology and alignment between loans and hedges to avoid basis risk."

For derivatives, standardised industry mechanisms are used where appropriate, while more complex structures are addressed in line with evolving regulatory guid-

ance. The bank's guiding principles remain legal certainty, economic neutrality and minimisation of litigation risk.

Impact on consumers

Although the reform is concentrated in wholesale markets, retail products are not immune. Hundreds of thousands of South African home loans are ultimately linked to JIBAR.

Standard Bank's retail communication strategy is aligned with regulatory guidance, the National Credit Act and Treating Customers Fairly principles. The focus is on clarity and simplicity — explaining what is changing, why it is changing and how monthly repayments may be affected.

Communication is being phased and tailored to retail sensitivities, with a clear transition roadmap to be implemented once final MPG guidance is confirmed.

Supporting corporate clients

Corporate treasurers face a different challenge, particularly those with complex loan facilities and derivative hedges.

Standard Bank has rolled out workshops, webinars and a dedicated ZARONIA information hub, alongside interest rate modelling tools that allow clients to assess exposure, simulate rate outcomes and compare ZARONIA with other risk-free rates such as SOFR.

"The objective is to equip clients with practical tools and transparent guidance to support informed transition planning," Lindstrom says.

Lessons from LIBOR

The LIBOR transition looms large over the process.

"LIBOR showed that benchmark reform is an enterprise-wide transformation, not just a treasury exercise," Lindstrom notes. Key lessons include early fallback remediation, alignment between cash products and derivatives, and clear communication.

For smaller institutions, the advice is direct: establish board-level oversight, inventory exposures early, align closely with industry standards and engage clients continuously.

As the clock ticks toward December 2026, the end of JIBAR is no longer theoretical. ZARONIA represents a more resilient, transparent benchmark — and a decisive shift in South Africa's financial architecture.

Section 12B tax investments explained in South Africa



By Robin Hayes

CRAIG ABBOTT, a director of asset management and tax advisor at The Financial Emporium, unravels the mysteries of Section 12B investments — highlighting the scheme's advantages of legally minimising the one's personal tax liability, although it is not without potential risks. Consider this. You are

depreciation allowance has moved up from 100% to 125% that is claimable in a single financial year.

Practically, how does it work?

You as the taxpayer you can deduct the investment against your taxable income, in the year of the investment.

For example; in the 2025 financial year, let's say you are liable

year one, it provides you with a total investment of R1,400,000 @ 45% tax rate. Remember that your SARS deduction INCLUDES the gearing from the banks. Your SARS recoupment for that financial year would be R630 000. This is deducted from the R700 000 that you HAD to pay SARS for your tax liability.

Additionally, every year you will receive income from your solar investment (this is deemed income in your hands and is taxable.) Where SARS recoupments are very large based on higher gearing in a particular year, SARS will rollover the taxable allowance for you into the next financial year.

The good news is that, this is not just for individuals, but is also accessible for trusts and companies.

So, what are risks?

There are many risks to consider; lack of gearing, SARS ruling changes, environmental and engineering risks, off taker risk and counter party risks amongst others.

One of the biggest risks you as a taxpayer faces is the timing risk of when your investment is actually deployed into a project — this is vital as it ensures you can qualify for your tax deduction. Investing in January for example, before the financial year-end — means that you will run a very high risk that the funds will NOT be deployed.

As a final word of caution — please ensure you have researched the investment company thoroughly and they have a long record of accomplishment of multiple projects before investing into a 12B.

"There are many risks to consider; lack of gearing, SARS ruling changes, environmental and engineering risks, off taker risk and counter party risks amongst others."

currently sitting with a tax problem — you may have just sold a business, been paid out as a major shareholder, or received a substantial bonus.

On the face of it a good "chunk" of your well-earned funds will be payable to the South African Revenue Service. However, the good news is that the money that is due to SARS can be invested to offset your tax liability via a Section 12B investment into a solar project.

What is section 12B?

Section 12B of the Income Tax Act, No 58 of 1962 "The Act" provides for a write-off of qualifying assets, including the provision for a capital allowance of assets used, in the production of renewable energy.

Until recently, the

for say R700 000 in tax. You do the necessary investigating and make an investment into a reputable business that offers a 12B investment. That investment of R700 000 is pooled with other likewise individuals and then gearing is applied (a term for borrowing or lending money from the bank). In year one gearing is pegged at 50%, year 2, 30% and year 3, 20%. Together with your R700 000, plus other investors and the gearing from the banks — a total amount of say R10m is raised to start a large solar project in a small town, in the Western Cape. The period for completion on these projects can vary, depending on the project owners and could be as long as 15-20 years.

If we look at your R700 000 and apportioned 50% gearing in

The case for crane refurbishment



Tailored hoist manufacture at Condra's Germiston factory.

REPLACING an overhead crane is costly. There is capital expenditure. There is risk. Not only must the buyer consider the scale of financial outlay, but also any possibility of equipment underperformance, or failure. The watchwords are care and caution.

One viable option, often overlooked, is refurbishment.

If the function of the crane has not changed, then refurbishment offers at least three advantages: cost savings; improved crane performance (through newer, faster hoists); and operator familiarity.

This is because modern refurbishment programmes go beyond basic repairs. They integrate updated controls, safety systems, drives and automation technologies to bring older cranes up to or beyond current performance and compliance standards.

Condra, a leading South African manufacturer of cranes and hoists, offers a comprehensive crane refurbishment service, as well as the design and manufacture of new cranes. Recent refurbishments have included machines as old as 40 years, installed and recommissioned with the same warranty as a new crane.

The familiarity factor, not as obvious as cost savings and improved crane performance, cannot be overemphasised as a leading advantage of refurbishment. The continued use of an as-new machine already familiar to operators avoids any need for retraining. Production can continue as before, with no change to established procedures.

If tempted to buy new, the buyer should ask about shipping times of component parts, should a breakdown occur, as delays could result in costly production downtime.

Condra will incorporate any kind of modern technology the customer might specify to upgrade the crane's capabilities. The overall cost of refurbishment is almost always less than buying a new crane.

Usually, Condra refurbishes only its own cranes, because spare parts from rival firms are not always available and are expensive to import, whereas Condra manufactures all spares locally.

"If the crane is one of ours, then refurbishment is usually worthwhile," said the

spokesman. "We encourage it because new crane prices are about 60% higher today than they were ten years ago. If needed, we can change crane capacity and span. Even cranes twenty years old or more can usually be

improved by installing variable frequency drives for smoother acceleration and deceleration. We can also fit enhancements such as remote control, and a digital read-out on the load.

"So, by refurbishing

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Enlit Africa 2026 Technical Programme: Built for engineers working under operational strain



ACROSS Africa's power and water sectors, engineers are being forced to make technical decisions in systems under growing strain. Grid instability, renewable integration, ageing infrastructure, rising demand and tighter performance expectations are no longer occasional challenges. They are the day-to-day operating context across generation, transmission, distribution and water networks. Technical teams are expected to keep systems reliable whilst introducing new technologies, respond to variability, and do more with assets that are often past their design life.

The Enlit Africa 2026 Technical Programme has been built for engineers and technical managers working inside this reality. It is designed to support practical decision-making, not abstract discussion. The programme is free to attend and delivered through technical hub sessions, hands-on learning and technical site visits. The focus is on how systems perform in practice across power systems, renewable energy and storage, and water infrastruc-

ture, using real-world case studies and applied technical insight. All technical sessions are CPD-accredited, allowing engineers to earn professional development credits whilst developing capability and staying professionally compliant.

A major theme of the programme is grid performance, where pressure is intensifying across the continent. Engineers are dealing with last-mile delivery challenges, ageing distribution infrastructure and rising demand variability, all of which make reliability harder to maintain. The Power Hub technical sessions at Enlit Africa 2026 are built around the operational issues technical teams are actively solving right now. Topics include distribution monitoring and metering, last-mile power delivery, real-time analytics and predictive maintenance. The intent is clear: enable practical improvement in system reliability and operational performance. For engineers and technical managers responsible for grid monitoring, maintenance strategies, and operational optimisation in 2026, this programme

is directly relevant to the decisions they are making.

Artificial intelligence is treated in the programme as a present implementation challenge. The shift is from whether AI will matter to how it should be used under real operating conditions. The Power Hub includes sessions focused on practical AI applications, real-time analytics and predictive maintenance, exploring how these tools are being applied to improve system performance. Importantly, the programme frames a core technical tension that engineers increasingly face: understanding where analytics genuinely delivers value and where it adds complexity that can undermine outcomes if poorly integrated.

Renewable integration is another central focus, reflecting the move from planning to execution and the rising technical complexity that comes with it. Engineers are now being asked to manage reliability, security and performance in systems that were not originally designed for high variability generation profiles. The Renewable Energy & Storage Hub

addresses this through sessions on modelling renewable integration on national grids, hybrid generation and storage, minigrids and grid resilience, and delivering energy storage. The programme positions these sessions as decision-support for engineers working in a rapidly changing generation and storage environment, where grid dynamics, system stability and performance trade-offs have become more demanding.

As renewable projects scale, the programme also highlights how technical due diligence is becoming a defining factor in long-term performance and risk management. The Renewable Energy & Storage Hub includes sessions on solar PV sizing, battery management systems, technical due diligence for renewable projects, and grid access and energy security. These topics reflect the operational reality of projects moving beyond development into long-term operation, where design choices, commissioning quality and asset management decisions directly shape performance, reliability and financial risk over time.

Engineers and technical managers are invited to download the Technical Programme, plan their participation and engage with free-to-attend CPD-accredited technical sessions at Enlit Africa that prioritise applied insight, real operating conditions and practical solutions for 2026.

Download the programme here: <https://wearevuka.com/energy/enlit-africa/visitors/>

Nordex Energy South Africa reinforces market presence with supply of turbines to Zen and Bergriver wind projects

NORDEX Energy South Africa (NESA) is pleased to confirm its role in supplying 33 Nordex Delta 4000 N163/5X turbines for the Zen and Bergriver wind projects in the Western Cape. With a combined capacity of 194 MW, both wind farms have now entered construction, with commissioning scheduled for mid-2027. Zen (100 MW) and Bergriver (94 MW), located between Gouda and Saron, are expected to generate approximately 580GWh of renewable electricity annually once operational, supporting corporate and industrial customers through an energy trading platform.



energy transition."

With the addition of these projects, NESA's total installed capacity now reaches 1 921MW across all wind farm facilities, including those under construction, with 525 turbines installed locally to date. These include existing operational assets such

600 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

Timmers added, "This milestone further underlines the increasing role of private renewable energy procurement in South Africa's evolving energy landscape and the importance of decarbonised power solutions across the economy."

Etana Energy, the trading partner, will offtake all electricity generated by the Zen and Bergriver wind farms under a 20-year power purchase agreement, supplying renewable power to a portfolio of commercial and industrial customers, including Growthpoint, the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, Tharisa Minerals, Petra Diamonds and Autocast.

Construction activities are now underway and are on schedule for mid-2027 commissioning.

"Evolving private demand for renewable power is transforming South Africa's energy landscape, with offtakers increasingly securing clean electricity through energy traders," concluded Timmers.

ACCIONA Energía is leading the build-out, while Nordex will deliver the turbine technology and assume operations and maintenance after commissioning.



Robert Timmers, Managing Director of Nordex Energy South Africa, said, "We are delighted to strengthen Nordex's footprint in South Africa with the supply and maintenance of 33 Delta 4000 turbines for the Zen and Bergriver wind farms. These projects are strategically important to our continued growth in the Western Cape, significantly expanding the Nordex installed base and reinforcing our commitment to the country's renewable

as the 138MW Gouda facility, alongside current developments.

The wind farms will be owned by ACCIONA Energía, which holds 51% of the projects, with the remaining 49% held by a joint venture between H1 Capital and Chariot Limited, both of which specialise in renewable energy development and investment.

Once operational, the electricity generated by Zen and Bergriver wind farms is expected to displace approximately



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From coal to clean: South Africa's 105,000 MW energy shift



By Adrian Ephraim

SOUTH Africa has embarked on its most ambitious energy transformation in the post-apartheid era, with the Cabinet's approval of the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2025 in October marking an historic pivot toward renewable energy dominance.

The R2.23 trillion plan commits to installing 105,000 MW of new generation capacity by 2039 - equivalent to rebuilding state-owned utility Eskom two-and-a-half times over. For the first time in South Africa's energy planning history, renewables will generate over half the country's electricity, with 34,000 MW of onshore wind, 25,000 MW of utility-scale solar, 16,000 MW of distributed generation, and 8,500 MW of battery storage planned.

"This is a pivot from greenhouse gas emissions," said Minister of Electricity and Energy Kgosisentsho Ramokgopa at the IRP 2025 launch. "We are going to get cleaner and cleaner."

The plan arrives as South Africa celebrates over 150 consecutive days without load shedding, demonstrating a stabilising electricity supply. However, the reprieve masks a looming challenge: without aggressive grid expansion, the country risks a fresh energy crisis as coal plants retire and renewable projects struggle to connect.

Procurement momentum accelerates

The government's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIP-PPP) Bid Window 7 has become the most solar-intensive round since the programme's 2011 launch. Total allocated capacity now stands at 3,940 MW across 18 solar projects, following three separate award announcements.

Cape Town-based independent power

producer Red Rocket has emerged as a major winner, securing 1,240 MW across six projects. The company's latest awards in December 2025 included the 240 MW Rondebosch Solar Park in Mpumalanga and two Free State facilities - Springhaas Solar Facility 1 (240 MW) and Springhaas Solar Facility 6 (170 MW).

Norwegian renewable energy company Scatec claimed the largest single allocation with the 846 MW Kroonstad PV cluster, comprising three solar plants in the Free State province. French energy giant Engie secured the 240 MW Corona Solar PV project in North West province.

The surge in solar awards came after the government strategically reallocated unused onshore wind capacity to solar projects, which proved more competitive on pricing and deployment timelines. Winning bids ranged from R420.74/MWh to R506.89/MWh.

The R390 billion grid challenge

South Africa's transmission infrastructure has become the critical bottleneck threatening renewable energy expansion. The national grid was designed to transmit power from centralised coal-fired plants in the northeast, not to accommodate decentralised renewable generation concentrated in the sun-drenched Northern and Western Cape provinces.

According to Nedbank's Corporate and Investment Banking Division, approximately R390 billion will be required over the next decade to build 14,218 kilometres of additional high-voltage transmission lines and install 170 transformers. The National Transmission Company South Africa (NTCSA) estimates 134 GW of additional grid connection capacity is needed to integrate the 172 GW renewable project pipeline.

"We are not short of megawatts - we are

short of grid capacity," Ramokgopa emphasised when launching the Independent Transmission Projects (ITP) programme in July 2025. The initiative targets the construction of 10,000 km of new lines and 59 substations over three years, with 25-year availability-based contracts offered to private developers.

The transmission challenge is most acute in provinces with the richest renewable resources. Eskom's 2025 Generation Connection Capacity Assessment revealed zero available grid capacity in the Northern Cape, which has a 29.2 GW project pipeline, and similarly constrained conditions in the Eastern and Western Cape.

Ground-level progress

Despite infrastructure constraints, deployment continues. The South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA) reported 928 MW of solar capacity added in Q1 2025 alone - 280 MW from REIPPPP projects and 647 MW from private sector installations. By mid-2025, South Africa's cumulative solar capacity reached 9,457 MW, with a healthy pipeline of 10,078 MW in development.

The March 2025 approval of the South African Renewable Energy Masterplan (SAREM) provides the industrial policy framework to support this transition, targeting at least R15 billion in investment by 2030 and creation of 25,000 direct jobs in manufacturing, logistics, engineering, and construction.

As South Africa races to build the grid infrastructure necessary to unlock its renewable potential, the next 24 months will prove critical. The projects awarded under REIP-PPP Bid Window 7 are expected to reach financial close and begin construction, while the first ITP transmission lines won't be operational until 2028 at the earliest.

The energy revolution is taking shape, but its success hinges on whether private capital can flow into transmission infrastructure as successfully as it has into generation - transforming South Africa from coal-dependent to clean-powered within a generation.

Seawater batteries for South Africa grid storage

By Kris van der Bijl

SEAWATER battery technology is still largely unproven at utility scale. But with 2026 peak tariff increases fast approaching, the Western Cape's 31.7GW energy pipeline is already reshaping itself - favouring hybrid storage configurations as a financial and operational hedge against rising energy costs.

Seawater batteries offer a potential promise of being safer, cheaper, and free from expensive imported metals like cobalt.

They can use abundant seawater as an electrolyte, with sodium or chloride ions facilitating charge and discharge.

For investors and local manufacturers, seawater batteries represent a chance to participate in a growing market while supporting South Africa's energy transition by adding new technology.

Seawater batteries as a cobalt-free solution

More traditional batteries favour raw materials like cobalt and lithium.

Cobalt is a major contributor to the cost and environmental footprint of lithium batteries.

Its supply is geographically concentrated, with roughly 70% of it coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is a supply chain, according to Oluwole Ojewale of the ISS Africa, entrenched in crime.

Professor Atsuo Yamada from the University of Tokyo calls for reducing cobalt de-



pendency in rechargeable batteries, stating that the technology of cobalt-free batteries "is a technical one, but its impact could be environmental, economic, social and technological."

One of the key advantages of seawater and related aqueous battery technologies is safety.

Recent research led by Xiaolei Wang at the University of Alberta confirmed that aqueous batteries can be safer, cheaper and easier to recycle than lithium-ion systems, particularly when designed for grid-level applications.

In his view, conventional lithium batteries "have reached their limitations in terms of energy storage capability, life cycle, and safety ... they are not suitable for large-scale grid-level energy storage".

Seeking newer alternatives to power grid storage technology is worthwhile.

Market potential and early adoption

The global market for alternative battery chemistries is current-

ly a tale of two distinct segments. While "seawater batteries" remain a niche marine sensing market - valued at US\$58.3 million by 2031 - the broader sodium-ion sector is the one aimed at grid disruption.

SNS Insider forecasts the global saltwater and sodium-ion market reaching US\$105 billion by 2032.

For Western Cape hubs, the primary driver can be reckoned as the safety-to-density ratio.

These aqueous systems offer a non-flammable alternative to lithium-ion, and the Cape could do with fewer fire risks.

Aligning with South Africa's energy policy goals

Why seawater batteries have yet to be integrated into South Africa's struggling power grid is likely because the technology is still in the early stages of commercial readiness compared to well-established lithium-ion systems.

CBN reached out

to the South African Independent Power Office, and they noted that they "have largely attracted lithium-ion technologies."

But they do note an openness to Long-Duration Energy Storage technologies.

"The IPPO has recently engaged with the South African Energy Storage Association (SAESA), and SAESA has indicated that they are doing a study that focuses on the value of energy storage to the SA grid."

They ultimately reiterated that they will "only procure as per the mandate and guided by the system requirements."

Non-lithium-ion technologies could form part of the storage technologies going forward, however this cannot be confirmed at this time."

As research continues and pilot projects emerge, seawater battery technology has reason to become a co-pillar in the country's energy storage ecosystem alongside lithium-ion and other alternative chemistries.

SPS launches solar buyout model to unlock capital for South African businesses

SUSTAINABLE Power Solutions (SPS), a leading pan-African funder, developer and operator of solar PV and battery storage plants in the Commercial & Industrial (C&I) market, has launched a new buyout model designed to unlock capital tied up in existing renewable energy systems.

Over the past decade, many South African businesses invested heavily in solar and battery storage to cut electricity costs and reduce exposure to load-

shedding. While these systems continue to deliver savings, the capital locked into them has limited growth and reinvestment opportunities. SPS's buyout model allows businesses to recover up to 100% of their original investment - and, in some cases, related costs such as roof strengthening or facility upgrades - while retaining the benefits of clean, reliable energy.

Under the model, SPS purchases a client's existing system and reimburses the full instal-

lation cost. The business then enters into a 10- to 20-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with fixed tariffs, ensuring predictable energy costs.

"This creates immediate capital relief for businesses, allowing funds to be reinvested into core operations," says Anja Visagie, Chief Growth & Marketing Officer at SPS. "At the same time, clients retain renewable energy savings without the operational, compliance and maintenance burden."

SPS assumes full responsibility for operations and maintenance, compliance, insurance and performance optimisation - addressing challenges many businesses underestimated when managing systems themselves.

The model also offers flexibility, including the option for clients to buy back their systems in future. Backed by British International Investment and other institutional shareholders, SPS ensures long-term reliability and compliance.

Unplugging South Africa - are we ready for businesses to go off-grid?



By Francois van Themaat, Co-founder & Managing Director: Large Projects at Sustainable Power Solutions (SPS)

SOUTH Africa's energy market is fast changing. With grid connection queues stretching up to five years in some areas and demand for reliable, affordable power rising, Commercial and Industrial (C&I) businesses face a pressing question: is it time to take control of their energy and go fully off-grid? For many companies, off-grid is no longer just a backup option or a safety net. It's the strategic choice for energy security, sustainability and predictable costs.

"In the future, off-grid energy is set to become mainstream in South Africa within the next five years."

For years, complete energy independence seemed out of reach. Technology was expensive, storage options were limited, and generating enough power to run a business off-grid felt impractical. That is changing rapidly. Modern solar panels capture sunlight far more efficiently, while battery storage allows businesses to use that energy at night or when clouds block the sun.

South Africa is particularly well-positioned to benefit, with abundant sunlight across much of the country. Nature has shown us the way each tree is in essence a small factory. A tree's leaves capture sunlight and converts it into energy to grow and produce fruit. The tree's trunk can be thought

of as a battery which stores energy, for when it is needed. Off-grid systems operate on a similar principle at an industrial scale, turning sunlight into reliable, usable power for businesses.

Costs have dropped dramatically. Solar panels are now more than 80% cheaper than a decade ago, while batteries, the key to energy storage, have fallen nearly 90% in price over a similar period. Combined with better efficiency and large-scale production, self-generation is becoming increasingly competitive with traditional grid electricity.

What off-grid really means in practice

Going off-grid requires a deliberate decision to disconnect from the utility grid. All energy needs must be generated on-site, through a combination of solar panels and battery storage, with a diesel generator for periods of pro-longed cloudy days.

Today, well-designed off-grid systems can supply 95% or more of an operation's energy from clean sources, with diesel used only during extended periods of heavy cloud or rain.

This approach provides three key benefits: predictable costs, reliable supply and a lower carbon footprint. Businesses are no longer subject to volatile electricity tariffs, punitive regulations or intermittent grid supply. Operations can run smoothly, while sustainability performance increasingly meets global expectations for export-focused companies.

Increased financing and accessibility options

Historically, the up-front cost of going

off-grid was a major barrier. That barrier is now changing. Models such as Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and Energy-as-a-Service (EaaS) allow businesses to adopt off-grid systems without a heavy initial investment.

Strategic considerations and opportunities

Off-grid solutions are not a one-size-fits-all. Space constraints limit feasibility for high-demand facilities such as data centres or dense urban buildings, which may instead rely on wheeling or embedded energy solutions. For businesses with sufficient rooftops, land, or even the ability to create additional space through carports and storage areas, going off-grid makes strategic sense.

The projects which SPS has implemented for the hospitality sector in the Seychelles, Kenya and Botswana demonstrates that fully off-grid operations are both technically possible and economically viable.

However, new developments should incorporate off-grid planning from the start, as buildings designed to maximise solar exposure and utilise unshaded areas can be used to avoid the high costs of grid connection, reduce operational risk and create more attractive, sustainable properties for tenants or buyers.

Off-grid energy as a strategic advantage

Falling technology costs, innovative financing models, and the urgent need for reliable power provide companies with a clear reason to take control of their energy. For C&I businesses with enough space, the choice is obvious: off-grid energy is cheaper, cleaner, and more predictable than remaining tied to the grid.

In the future, off-grid energy is set to become mainstream in South Africa within the next five years. Businesses that embrace it now gain resilience, operational certainty, and sustainability advantages that will give it a competitive edge for the future.

SAPVIA calls for constructive dialogue on solar registration

THE South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA), the representative body for the solar PV industry, today clarified the regulatory requirements for Small-Scale Embedded Generation (SSEG) systems, emphasising that while the registration process must be streamlined, it remains a critical legal and safety requirement.

SAPVIA's comments follow recent public discourse regarding the necessity of registering rooftop solar systems with Eskom or local municipalities.

"SAPVIA acknowledges the concerns raised by civil society groups like the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) regarding the administrative hurdles faced by solar users," says Dr. Rethabile Melamu, CEO of SAPVIA.

"We agree that communication from distributors should be constructive and avoid threats of disconnection. However, we must remain firm: registration is a legal obligation that ensures the safety of our homes, the protection of technical workers, and the stability of the national grid."

SAPVIA believes that for the solar transition to succeed, the relationship between distributors and citizens must be based on clearly articulated guide-



Scatec's Kenhardt project in the Northern Cape, one of the largest hybrid solar and battery storage facilities globally. Source: Norfund

lines rather than punitive measures.

"Threats are unhelpful and do not increase long-term compliance," Dr. Melamu adds.

"We call on distribution entities to be more mindful of the delays in their own systems. For registration to be a success, distributors must provide efficient, timely feedback to applicants. At the same time, we cannot ignore the regulatory framework that governs our shared energy infrastructure."

The requirement to register grid-tied installations is grounded in the following pillars:

- The Electricity Regulation Act (Schedule 2): For embedded generators under 100kW, the law mandates that the Distributor keep a formal register of each facility.
- Safety and grid integrity: Registration

prevents "islanding" a dangerous scenario where a private solar system feeds power back into a grid that maintenance workers believe is de-energised.

- Technical standards: Compliance ensures systems meet the RSA Distribution Code and SANS 10142-1 standards, protecting homeowners from electrical fires and ensuring insurance validity. SAPVIA has actively worked with stakeholders to remove barriers to compliance. As of October 2025, the process has been significantly simplified:

- Reduced red tape: Residential customers no longer require a professional engineer's sign-off. A certification from a Department of Labour-registered

electrician, a valid Certificate of Compliance (CoC), and an inverter test certificate are now sufficient.

- Financial Relief: To support law-abiding citizens, Eskom has waived registration and connection fees for systems up to 50kVA until March 31, 2026.

"Our position is not one-dimensional," concludes Dr. Melamu.

"We will continue to advocate for a more user-friendly registration process and better communication from utilities. We urge all stakeholders to move away from an antagonistic stance and work together toward a safe, transparent, and legally compliant energy future."

Learn more about SAPVIA at www.sapvia.co.za.

Etana Energy concludes a market-leading, flexible renewable energy power purchase agreement with Sibanye-Stillwater

600 GWh per annum of renewable electricity, equivalent to approximately 220MW, will be supplied to Sibanye-Stillwater's South African operations from a diversified generation portfolio of solar and wind projects over a 10-year term.

JSE- and NYSE-listed Sibanye-Stillwater has signed a market-leading, flexible power purchase agreement (PPA) for the procurement of wheeled renewable energy with Etana Energy. Under the 10-year agreement, Etana Energy, a licensed electricity trader, will supply 600 GWh per year of renewable electricity, equivalent to approximately 220MW, from a diversified portfolio of solar and wind projects. The wheeled electricity will be delivered to Sibanye-Stillwater's South African operations using the na-

tional electricity transmission network.

The agreement was structured by Etana Energy to meet Sibanye-Stillwater's operational requirements, integrating seamlessly with its existing long-term bilateral PPAs and aligning with the life-of-mine profile of its South African operations. The agreement enables decarbonisation for Sibanye-Stillwater's South African gold and PGM operations while reducing electricity costs. Once operational from late 2027, the renewable electricity supplied under the agreement is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 648,000 tCO₂e¹ per annum.

Sibanye-Stillwater CEO, Richard Stewart commented "Our agreement with Etana Energy adds a material 220MW equivalent to over 35% of our renewable energy

target and takes us closer towards our 2040 carbon neutral goal. Not only does this underscore our sustainability commitments but it is also expected to provide a lower-cost energy supply for our South African operations."

Etana Energy CEO, Evan Rice commented "We're incredibly proud to have been selected by Sibanye-Stillwater, a global mining juggernaut and sustainability champion, as a renewable energy partner. Our common commitment to global sustainability formed the cornerstone of our strategic partnership.

"Large power users are playing a critical role in underpinning the investment in new clean energy generation capacity in South Africa with their offtake commitments. To maximise this potential and the value creation for customers,

it's critical to build solutions around their specific business objectives and operational outlook and provide the contractual flexibility that mitigates the risk associated with long-term commitments, which is something we pride ourselves on. We look forward to delivering this energy and contributing to the competitiveness of Sibanye-Stillwater's operations and their positive socio-economic impact in South Africa."

Etana Energy has signed customer power purchase agreements with more than 20 large electricity users. This agreement represents the third long-term PPA concluded by Etana Energy with large mining companies, following agreements previously signed in 2024 with Tharisa Minerals and Petra Diamonds for wheeled renewable electricity supply.

Why precision cutting has become a strategic advantage for South African manufacturers

IN modern manufacturing, precision cutting is no longer a back-end technical function. It is a strategic input that directly affects quality, cost control, lead times, and global competitiveness. For over 20 years, MAXJET has operated not just as a cutting supplier, but as a specialist production partner supporting some of South Africa's most demanding industrial applications.

In practical terms, being a cutting supplier today means more than processing material to specification. It means understanding how a cut component behaves further down the production line — how it fits, performs, and maintains its integrity during assembly and use. MAXJET's role often begins long before the first cut is made, working closely with customers to ensure materials, thicknesses, and cutting parameters are optimised for the end application.

One of the most critical differentiators in this process is the elimination of Heat Affected Zones (H.A.Z.). Traditional heat-applied cutting methods introduce thermal stress that can alter a material's metallurgy and intrinsic properties. This can lead to distortion, warpage, discolouration, or compromised strength — all unacceptable risks when working with aerospace-grade alloys or specialised tool steels. Waterjet cutting, by contrast, is a cold-cutting process. By removing heat from the equation entirely, MAXJET ensures that what engineers specify is exactly what manufacturers receive, with no hidden structural trade-offs.

As South African manufacturers face mounting pressure to reduce capital expenditure while improving efficiency, the role of outsourced precision cutting has evolved significantly. Entrusting a specialised supplier with exotic and high-value alloys requires confidence — not only in equipment, but in experience. Decades of focused expertise allow MAXJET to process expensive materials accurately and consistently, helping clients avoid costly errors while directing capex toward

their core business operations.

Recent investment in advanced waterjet technology has further expanded what is possible locally. While conventional systems typically handle material up to 150mm thick, MAXJET's latest waterjet system can process from 0.25mm through to an exceptional 300mm. This unlocks new opportunities for billet-based components, enabling thicker sections to be cut with minimal wastage and, crucially, without introducing H.A.Z. For

many manufacturers, this capability removes the need for additional machining stages or off-shore processing.

The assumption that owning specialised machinery equates to control is increasingly being challenged. Ownership can quickly become a bottleneck when skilled labour is scarce, machinery becomes outdated, or replacement costs exceed realistic return-on-investment thresholds. In complex, multi-process environments, outsourcing precision cutting can restore

flexibility rather than reduce it.

MAXJET's value also extends beyond cutting alone. Its in-house manufacture of tooling, jigs, and custom blades — including non-standard components not available off-the-shelf — supports production and assembly lines directly. Combined with internal R&D that tests materials and establishes cutting parameters upfront, this approach eliminates trial-and-error and reduces material wastage before production even begins.

Looking ahead, glob-



al competitiveness will demand a first-world manufacturing mindset: disciplined methodologies, intelligent policy, and increasing AI integration. While technology continues to advance, the fundamentals remain unchanged.

Precision manufacturing — executed correctly, consistently, and without compromise — will always sit at the heart of industrial progress.

At MAXJET, that precision is engineered into every cut.



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B.E.D. appointed as Harris Products Group authorised distributor



BOLT and Engineering Distributors Group (B.E.D.) has been appointed as an authorised distributor for the Harris Products Group, representing its full product portfolio in South Africa.

Harris's appointment of B.E.D. establishes a single, nationally supported distribution channel for the company's cutting, gas control and associated products portfolio - supported

by extensive stockholding, deep technical expertise and value-adding pre-and after-sales support.

The Harris Products Group is globally recognised for its industry-leading metalworking equipment and consumables for brazing, soldering, welding, cutting and gas distribution. An engineering-led approach results in products designed for demanding industrial

environments where safety, reliability and longevity are critical.

According to Anthony McGuinness, Sales Manager for the Harris Products Group in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a strong operational and cultural fit with B.E.D.: "South Africa is a market where robust technical understanding, safety compliance and product support are essential. B.E.D. brings an extensive national footprint, experienced technical and sales teams - and an established track record in supporting high-quality, high-performance industrial brands. This creates a solid platform for long-term customer support."

Mike Giltrow, CEO of B.E.D. says that this milestone appointment marks a significant shift in how the Harris brand will be supported locally.

"For B.E.D., this milestone appointment reinforces our strategy of selectively partnering with premier suppliers."

"We have worked with and respected the Harris brand for many of our 42 years in the industry. However, this appointment takes our engagement to a whole new level - with a direct relationship and full accountability for how Harris products are supplied, supported and positioned within key target sectors in South Africa.

"Harris products are engineered for safety, reliability and an impressively long service life. B.E.D.'s focus is on ensuring customers not only receive the correct product - but also the technical support and application knowledge to realise its inherent, long-term value," Giltrow adds.

Engineering quality, safety and compliance

The Harris Products Group's products are engineered to meet in-



L-R: Anthony McGuinness, Sales Manager for the Harris Products Group in Sub-Saharan Africa, Marco Gianelli, Director of International Business - Equipment for the Harris Products Group, and Shaun Geyer, B.E.D.'s Harris Products brand ambassador and technical specialist.

ternational safety and performance standards, with many designed for high-risk, regulated environments.

Marco Gianelli, Director of International Business - Equipment for the Harris Products Group, explains: "Our products are built to operate safely and reliably in extreme conditions - from heavy industrial fabrication to mining and energy-related applications. Full manufacturing traceability and compliance with international standards form part of our value proposition. Having a local partner that understands these technical requirements is essential."

Local availability and technical support

A key focus of B.E.D.'s appointment by Harris is to ensure consistent product availability and responsive local support. B.E.D.'s countrywide branch network and logistics capability enable customers to access Harris products, while benefiting from its local technical assistance.

Shaun Geyer, B.E.D.'s Harris Products brand ambassador

and technical specialist says, "We are very excited to play our role in supporting our customers with the correct technical advice, application knowledge, pre-and after-sales support, ensuring that the equipment performs as intended throughout its lifecycle."

Supporting diversification across industries

While the Harris Products Group has a strong legacy in the mining sector, the appointment of B.E.D. as an authorised distributor also supports its expansion into additional target sectors - including metal fabrication, oil and gas, petrochemical, agriculture, HVAC and light manufacturing. These sectors increasingly require compliant, high-quality gas control and cutting equipment, supported by knowledgeable local partners.

"For B.E.D., this milestone appointment reinforces our strategy of selectively partnering with premier suppliers, to the benefit of our valued customers," Giltrow concludes.

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How Beckhoff's IP67 EtherCAT technology is reshaping industrial automation

IN industrial automation, longevity is often the clearest signal of reliability. German automation specialist Beckhoff Automation has reached a significant milestone: 25 years of delivering IP67-rated EtherCAT Box modules that have reshaped how manufacturers approach machine-level input/output (I/O) distribution.

This anniversary reflects more than endurance. For a quarter-century, Beckhoff's EP and EPP series modules have been mounted directly onto machinery across industrial environments worldwide, from food processing lines to mining operations. Their IP67 rating – providing complete protection against dust and resistance to water immersion – has proven essential in real-world conditions where exposure to moisture, debris and vibration is unavoidable.

What distinguishes Beckhoff is not simply maintaining a product line for 25 years, but continuously refining it to meet evolving industrial demands. Recent module releases demonstrate how incremental innovation can address emerging challenges without abandoning proven architectures.

The newly introduced EP3048-0002 and EPP3048-002 analogue input modules illustrate this approach. By offering eight channels within a compact 30mm housing, these modules respond directly to one of modern manufacturing's most pressing constraints: space. As factories pursue higher levels of automation within existing footprints, compact, high-density I/O becomes a critical enabler of Industry 4.0 initiatives.

Flexibility is another recurring theme. The 2-channel IO-Link master EP6222-0002 recognises that not every application requires high channel counts. Its ability to configure IO-Link channels as digital inputs or outputs allows system integrators to right-size solutions, avoiding unnecessary cost while retaining adaptability.

For materials handling environments, the EP7402-0067 EtherCAT Box simplifies the integration of increasingly complex roller conveyor systems. Supporting both 24V and 48V motors

and featuring an EtherCAT expansion port, the module enables easier scaling of conveyor networks. In distribution centres where uptime and throughput directly affect margins, reduced commissioning time delivers im-

mediate operational value.

Safety-critical industries benefit from the EPX3184-0092, which connects intrinsically safe, HART-capable field devices from hazardous zones directly into safety architec-

tures. By enabling standard 4–20mA signals to serve safety functions through TwinSAFE SC, the module bridges operational monitoring and functional safety – a significant advantage in sectors such as pet-

rochemicals and mining.

Smaller enhancements also reflect Beckhoff's attention to field realities. The addition of addressing rotary selector switches across all 30mm modules improves

identification during installation and troubleshooting, reducing commissioning errors in complex systems.

For South African manufacturers under pressure to improve productivity while managing costs, Beck-

hoff's IP67 journey offers a clear lesson. Sustainable automation progress often comes not from constant reinvention, but from methodical refinement of proven technologies that align closely with real operational needs.

The complete control solution in Hygienic Design



Beckhoff offers an integrated stainless steel control system with Hygienic Design for the food manufacturing, beverage, pharmaceutical and packaging industries. All stainless steel components meet the stringent requirements of hygiene and cleanroom regulations:

- The stainless steel IP65 panels and Panel PCs featuring gap-free housing design and flush-mounted touch screen are available in 12-, 15- or 19-inch display sizes.
- The EHEDG-certified AM8800 stainless steel servomotors with IP69K protection are designed for torques between 1 and 16.7 Nm. These motors feature One Cable Technology which combines power and feedback signals in a single standard motor cable, significantly lowering material and commissioning costs as a result.
- The stainless steel I/O modules with EtherCAT interface and IP69K protection cover a wide range of applications for all common signal types.



Scan to experience the full hygienic design portfolio

New Automation Technology **BECKHOFF**

SA Canegrowers calls for sugar tax to be scrapped as imports threaten local industry

SA CANEGROWERS has called on government to urgently scrap the sugar tax, warning that a sharp rise in subsidised sugar imports is displacing locally produced sugar and pushing South Africa's sugar industry deeper into crisis.

The industry supports more than one million livelihoods across Kwa-Zulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, anchored by 27,000 small-scale and 1,100 large-scale grow-

ers. Yet growers have faced unprecedented pressure over the past year as rising input costs and volatile global markets collide with weak domestic demand. SA Canegrowers argues the sugar tax is compounding this distress.

According to the organisation's analysis of SARS data, 153,344 tonnes of imported sugar entered South Africa between January and September 2025, compared with just 20,924

tonnes over the same period in 2020. The previous peak was 55,213 tonnes in 2024.

"Imported sugar is often heavily subsidised in exporting countries, but the only beneficiaries are import agents able to sell at local prices," said SA Canegrowers chair Higgins Mdluli.

He warned that South African growers are being forced to compete with dumped imports while policies such as

the sugar tax suppress local demand. The tax, introduced in 2018, saw more than 16,000 jobs lost in its first year, with no clear evidence of improved health outcomes.

SA Canegrowers is calling for stronger import protections and meaningful engagement with industry, arguing that scrapping the sugar tax would be a critical first step to safeguard rural economies, jobs and food security.

Sustainability benefits of TankJet nozzles for tank cleaning

TANKJET nozzles, manufactured by Spraying Systems Co., represented by Monitor Engineering in Southern Africa for over 75 years, are specialised spray devices designed for efficient tank and vessel cleaning in industries such as beer, wine, distillery, juice and dairy. These nozzles facilitate automated cleaning processes that significantly advance sustainability efforts by minimising resource consumption, reducing waste, and enhancing operational efficiency.

One primary way TankJet nozzles promote sustainability is through substantial water conservation. Traditional manual or static cleaning methods often rely on excessive water via fill-and-drain cycles or high-volume sprays. In contrast, TankJet nozzles deliver precise, high-impact sprays with optimised patterns, achieving up to 65% reductions in water usage.



the need for secondary manual cleaning. Automated systems equipped with these nozzles have been shown to save millions of litres of water annually.

Energy efficiency is another key benefit. By shortening cleaning cycles—often by up to 80%—TankJet nozzles reduce the energy required for pumping and heating water or cleaning solutions. This is particularly impactful in processes using heated fluids,

waste generation and simpler wastewater treatment, as effluent volumes and contamination levels decrease. For example, in beverage processing like beer or spirits production tank cleaning, automated TankJet systems enable faster turnarounds with fewer chemicals, supporting eco-friendly practices.

Additionally, these nozzles contribute to waste reduction by producing less wastewater and extending equipment life through durable designs, which curbs manufacturing waste from frequent replacements. Improved worker safety—by eliminating confined space entry—indirectly supports sustainability by reducing accident-related downtime and resource-intensive recoveries.

Overall, TankJet tank cleaning nozzles align with global sustainability goals by optimising resource use and minimising environmental impact. Companies adopting them not only achieve cost savings—often in the tens of thousands of Rands annually—but also demonstrate commitment to responsible operations, making these nozzles a vital tool for eco-conscious tank cleaning.

For more information, or for no-charge tank cleaning audits, contact grant@monitorspray.co.za. www.spray.co.za

"TankJet nozzles deliver precise, high-impact sprays with optimised patterns, achieving up to 65% reductions in water usage."

For instance, in a beverage manufacturing plant, implementing TankJet 80 and 65 units halved cleaning times and cut water consumption dramatically, saving approximately US\$36,000 annually through efficient coverage of tanks up to 15m in diameter.

Similarly, a distillery replaced conventional nozzles with TankJet 6353 and 80 models, slashing water use by 50% while eliminating

where quicker operations lower overall energy demands. In the power plant example, smaller pumps were sufficient post upgrade, further cutting energy costs.

Reduced chemical usage enhances environmental sustainability. TankJet's precise calibration ensures optimal distribution of detergents, minimising the amount needed for effective cleaning. This leads to less hazardous



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SCAN
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Bühler Southern Africa: Food processing, milling & industrial solutions from Johannesburg



BÜHLER Johannesburg serves as a cornerstone of Bühler's presence in Africa, acting as the regional headquarters for Southern Africa and a trusted partner to customers across a diverse range of industries. Established in South Africa in 1972, our Johannesburg operation has evolved into a vibrant hub of innovation, engineering excellence, and customer service, underpinned by a dedicated team of over 220 professionals committed to delivering world-class solutions.

As part of the Bühler Group, a global leader in processing solutions, Bühler Johannesburg plays a pivotal role in supporting our customers throughout the full lifecycle of their operations. We provide tailored sales, project execution, manufacturing, logistics, and after-sales support from our modern facility in Honeydew, Gauteng. Through our local footprint, we ensure quick response times, deep industry knowledge, and the capacity to solve complex challenges in the food, feed, and advanced materials sectors.

Our business is founded on a simple but powerful premise: being close to our customers matters. We understand that uptime, reliability, and operational efficiency are critical to our clients' success. That is why service is at the heart of everything we do. With dedicated field service engineers and service stations in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Lusaka, and Maputo, we offer robust spare and wear parts provision, roll refuting, die refurbishment, preventative maintenance, and 24/7 technical support tailored to local needs.

In the food sector, Bühler's solutions span the breadth of the value

chain—from grain intake and handling systems to milling, cereal processing, and food manufacturing technologies. We work closely with millers, food producers, and consumer brands to improve product quality, enhance safety, and minimise resource consumption. Our commitment to innovation and sustainability is aligned with Bühler's global mission of "Innovations for a Better World," enabling safe and affordable food production for communities across Southern Africa and beyond.

While food processing remains a core focus, our expertise extends into related industries such as agricultural process-

ing, mining, power generation, and industrial manufacturing. The Johannesburg facility also incorporates a modern manufacturing capability, producing chain conveyors and customised equipment that meet stringent quality standards and serve clients across multiple sectors.

At Bühler Johannesburg, our customer-centric culture drives us to anticipate needs, solve problems collaboratively, and deliver solutions that create measurable value. Our team's technical expertise, coupled with a strong local presence and global resources, ensures that we remain close to our customers - today and into the future.

Predictive maintenance and expert support now available to the bottling industry

BMG's Power Transmission division is now offering the food and beverage sector access to Regal Rexnord's Premium Services package, which has been developed to improve production line efficiency and minimise costly downtime in demanding manufacturing environments.

BMG's Regal Rexnord's Premium Services programme provides glass, bottling and beverage manufacturers with expert audits, predictive maintenance capabilities and comprehensive on-site training to optimise conveyor system performance. This proactive approach helps facilities maintain continuous operations, while reducing unexpected equipment failures that can halt production lines.

"Our Premium Services package represents a significant advancement in how we support our food and beverage customers," explains Carlo Beukes, Business Unit Manager of BMG's Power Transmission division. "By combining predictive maintenance with expert technical support and easy access to replacement parts, we're helping manufacturers protect their production



schedules and improve overall equipment effectiveness.

"Our customers in the food, beverage and glass manufacturing sectors face intense pressure to maintain production schedules, while managing costs. Through our Premium Services offering, we're able to deliver predictive maintenance strategies, expert technical audits and training that transform how our customers approach equipment management.

"The Regal Rexnord Data Portal integration means our customers can identify and order the exact components they require quickly and accurately, reducing inventory carrying costs, while ensuring they have critical parts available when required."

Conveying solutions for demanding applications

BMG's comprehensive Regal Rexnord portfolio for the beverage industry includes integrated hot and cold end conveying solutions specifically engineered for the demanding conditions of glass and container manufacturing. The company provides a full range of product conveying systems, complemented by an expanding portfolio of PowerTrain solutions.

Specialised solutions for abrasive environments

For glass container manufacturing applications where abrasion resistance is critical, BMG recommends Regal Rexnord BWX material - a specially formulated solution engi-

neered specifically for chains exposed to glass shards, sand, dirt and other harsh particles. BWX material can extend chain wear life up to five times, compared to standard acetal materials, delivering superior Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) in high-wear environments.

BWX is available from BMG in multiple chain types, including MatTop and TableTop configurations, as well as side-flexing chains for curved conveyor sections.

Regal Rexnord power transmission components - enhanced by the Premium Services package - are available through BMG's Power Transmission division for food, beverage and glass manufacturing customers throughout Africa.



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Why metal packaging matters for Food and Beverage sustainability



AS sustainability moves from aspiration to obligation in South Africa's food and beverage sector, packaging choices are coming under increasing scrutiny. Among available options, metal packaging continues to stand out for its unmatched recyclability, durability and role in enabling a truly circular economy.

Aluminium and steel packaging are infinitely recyclable without loss of quality, making them the ideal materials for food and beverage applications where safety, shelf life and environmental performance must align. In South Africa, this circular potential is being actively realised through strong collaboration between industry, recyclers and regulators — a model which was recently showcased by MetPac-SA, the registered Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) for metal packaging.

MetPac-SA joined forces with and Ferrous Metals Processors (FMP) to showcase the circular economy in action by hosting a Metal Packaging Recovery and Recycling Process Appreciation Day at their facility in Gauteng. The event formed part of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's (DFFE) annual audit and engagement programme and brought together MetPac-SA members, strategic partners and government representatives.

The objective was clear: to provide del-

egates with an inside look at large-scale metal recycling operations and to demonstrate how metal packaging recovery supports both environmental sustainability and local economic development.

A leader in sustainable metal recovery

Ferrous Metals Processors is a cornerstone of South Africa's metal recycling ecosystem. As the largest buyer, processor and distributor of ferrous scrap in the local market, FMP specialises in the collection, handling and processing of used steel cans and other metal packaging. Its state-of-the-art facilities are designed for mass processing, decontamination and recovery, positioning the company as a vital contributor to the circular economy.

The site tour offered delegates a firsthand view of the ferrous shredding process, showing how post-consumer metal packaging is efficiently processed and prepared for reintroduction into manufacturing supply chains. Attendees were also given an exclusive preview of FMP's aluminium re-smelting plant, currently under construction, which will significantly expand the company's capacity for sustainable aluminium recovery and circular production.

"The beauty of metal packaging lies in the fact that it never becomes waste — it simply be-

comes a resource again. Facilities like FMP show that with the right infrastructure in place, metal packaging can be recovered at scale, delivering both environmental and economic value," said Dr Kishan Singh, CEO of MetPac-SA, at the event.

Building confidence in metal packaging

The event reinforced South Africa's commitment to a thriving metal packaging circular economy and highlighted why metal remains a trusted packaging choice for the food and beverage sector. MetPac-SA has thanked Howard Fine, the FMP team and all partners for their support, and plans to host further site visits in 2026 to continue promoting transparency, innovation and collaboration across the packaging industry.

Why metal packaging works for food and beverage

For food and beverage producers seeking packaging solutions that combine performance, compliance and sustainability, metal packaging continues to prove that it is built for the long term. Metal packaging continues to be a preferred choice for food and beverage producers worldwide thanks to its performance, safety and sustainability credentials that make it uniquely suited to modern packaging demands.

- **Infinitely recyclable:** Aluminium and steel can be recycled repeatedly without any loss of quality. This makes metal packaging a true circular material, supporting closed-loop recycling systems and reducing reliance on virgin resources.
- **Excellent product protection:** Metal provides a

complete barrier against light, oxygen, moisture and contaminants, helping to preserve flavour, freshness and nutritional value while extending shelf life — often without the need for preservatives.

- **Food safety and compliance:** Metal packaging is robust, tamper-resistant and meets stringent food safety standards, making it ideal for beverages, canned foods, aerosols and speciality food products.
- **High collection and recycling rates:** Thanks to its intrinsic value, metal is actively collected by both formal recyclers and informal waste pickers, contributing to higher recovery rates and keeping valuable material out of landfill.
- **Supports local jobs and communities:** The metal recycling value chain creates employment across collection, sorting, processing and manufacturing, while enabling fair income opportunities for waste pickers.
- **Lower environmental footprint over time:** Recycling metal uses significantly less energy than producing it from raw materials, resulting in meaningful reductions in carbon emissions across the packaging lifecycle.
- **Proven infrastructure at scale:** South Africa already has well-established metal recycling and processing infrastructure, enabling efficient recovery and reintegration of metal packaging into new products.

For more information visit <https://www.metpacsa.org.za>

Africa's one-stop shop for vacuum and over-pressure technology

THE BUSCH GROUP now unites two global leaders, Busch Vacuum Solutions and Pfeiffer Vacuum, reshaping the vacuum and overpressure landscape while expanding its footprint across Africa. Headquartered in Germany, the group operates worldwide and is now increasingly focused on supporting African industries that rely on high-precision technology.

Family-owned and managed by the Busch family, the group employs over 8,000 people in 44 countries and operates 23 manufacturing plants globally. In Africa, Busch-Pfeiffer Vacuum Solutions supplies a comprehensive range of vacuum pumps, overpressure blowers, compressors, and integrated systems.



rough industrial vacuum through to ultra-high vacuum for space, analytical and R&D applications."

Sean Pieterse, Managing Director of BUSCH GROUP Africa, adds, "The value proposition has expanded across many market segments, and we've delivered unique solutions into non-traditional Busch markets across Africa."

Service is central to

tomor processes," Fourie notes. "We deliver central vacuum and bespoke turnkey systems for food packaging, medical, wastewater, pharmaceuticals, R&D, aerospace, printing, woodwork, plastics, and more."

Pfeiffer Vacuum supports advanced sectors like the space industry, providing simulation chambers, testing equipment, and helium leak detection systems for satellites.

A world-class African headquarters

The Johannesburg facility, opened in 2023, includes a best-in-class service centre, advanced systems building, and extensive warehousing.

"We can now repair turbomolecular pumps locally, previously only done in Europe," Fourie says. "Our Class 10 000 clean room is the first of its kind in Africa."

The site also features ISO-standard flow testing rigs, liquid ring test bays, online condition monitoring, and a 40-seater training room, ensuring the highest quality, precision, and customer support.

Busch-Pfeiffer engineers across Africa focus on reducing energy and water use, extending asset life, and minimising downtime while delivering customised solutions for each client.

For your next vacuum or overpressure solution, contact Busch-Pfeiffer Vacuum Solutions Africa.



In 2023, the group opened a state-of-the-art vacuum solutions centre in Johannesburg, reinforcing its commitment to South Africa and the continent. The company also operates sales and service centres in Cape Town, Durban, Ghana, Kenya, and Egypt, fully equipped for on-site maintenance, workshop repairs, and production optimisation. They can even service competitor products.

Manie Fourie, Sales Director for Africa, explains, "To achieve our vision, we need to strengthen market visibility and leverage Pfeiffer Vacuum alongside the extended overpressure and compressor range in the BUSCH GROUP. We can now deliver solutions from

the group's strategy. Africa-wide service centres with certified technicians provide 24/7 support, including maintenance, workshop repairs, and production optimisation.

"Service is a major focus," says Fourie. "We've added IoT-based condition monitoring connected to AI, helping predict maintenance schedules and prevent failures."

Comprehensive solutions for multiple industries

Busch-Pfeiffer offers oil rotary vane, dry rotary vane, screw, dry claw, liquid ring, turbomolecular and diaphragm pumps, as well as leak detectors, compressors and blowers.

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Turning trash into treasure: The waste-to-energy revolution and Veolia's leadership

AS global waste generation surges toward 3.4 billion tonnes annually by 2050, traditional landfilling has become unsustainable. Waste-to-energy (WtE) technology offers a transformative solution, converting municipal solid waste, biomass, and organic materials into electricity, heat, and fuel while dramatically reducing landfill volumes. Leading this revolution is Veolia, whose comprehensive approach and technological innovation have established it as the sector's undisputed leader.

The waste-to-energy imperative

Waste-to-energy facilities tackle multiple environmental challenges simultaneously. Veolia diverts waste from landfills, reducing methane emissions - a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Modern WtE plants reduce waste volume by up to 90% while generating clean energy that displaces fossil fuels. By incorporating biomass feedstocks alongside municipal waste, these facilities enhance their renewable energy credentials and carbon neutrality potential. With mounting energy security concerns and growing circular economy principles, WtE represents resource recovery, not just waste management.

Why Veolia leads the pack

Veolia's dominance stems from several key factors:

Scale and experience: Operating over 70 energy recovery facilities worldwide, Veolia processes millions of tonnes of waste and biomass annually, generating enough energy to power cities. This unmatched operational footprint provides economies of scale and institutional knowledge that competitors cannot replicate.

Technological excellence: Veolia continuously invests in cutting-edge combustion technology, advanced emissions control systems, and energy efficiency improvements. Their facilities consistently exceed stringent European emission standards while maximising energy output. Their systems handle diverse feedstocks, including agricultural residues, forestry biomass, and organic waste streams.

Circular economy integration: Unlike competitors focused solely on incineration, Veolia embeds WtE within broader circular economy strategies—

combining recycling, composting, biomass valorisation, and energy recovery to extract maximum value from waste streams. Their facilities recover metals from bottom ash and utilise residues in construction materials. Biomass integration enables biochar

and bio-based fertiliser production, further closing nutrient loops.

Innovation pipeline: Veolia invests heavily in next-generation technologies, including gasification, pyrolysis, and plasma arc systems, promising greater efficiency and lower emis-

sions. These advanced thermal conversion technologies excel at biomass processing, enabling syngas, bio-oils, and valuable biochemical production. Their R&D commitment keeps them ahead of regulatory curves and market demands.

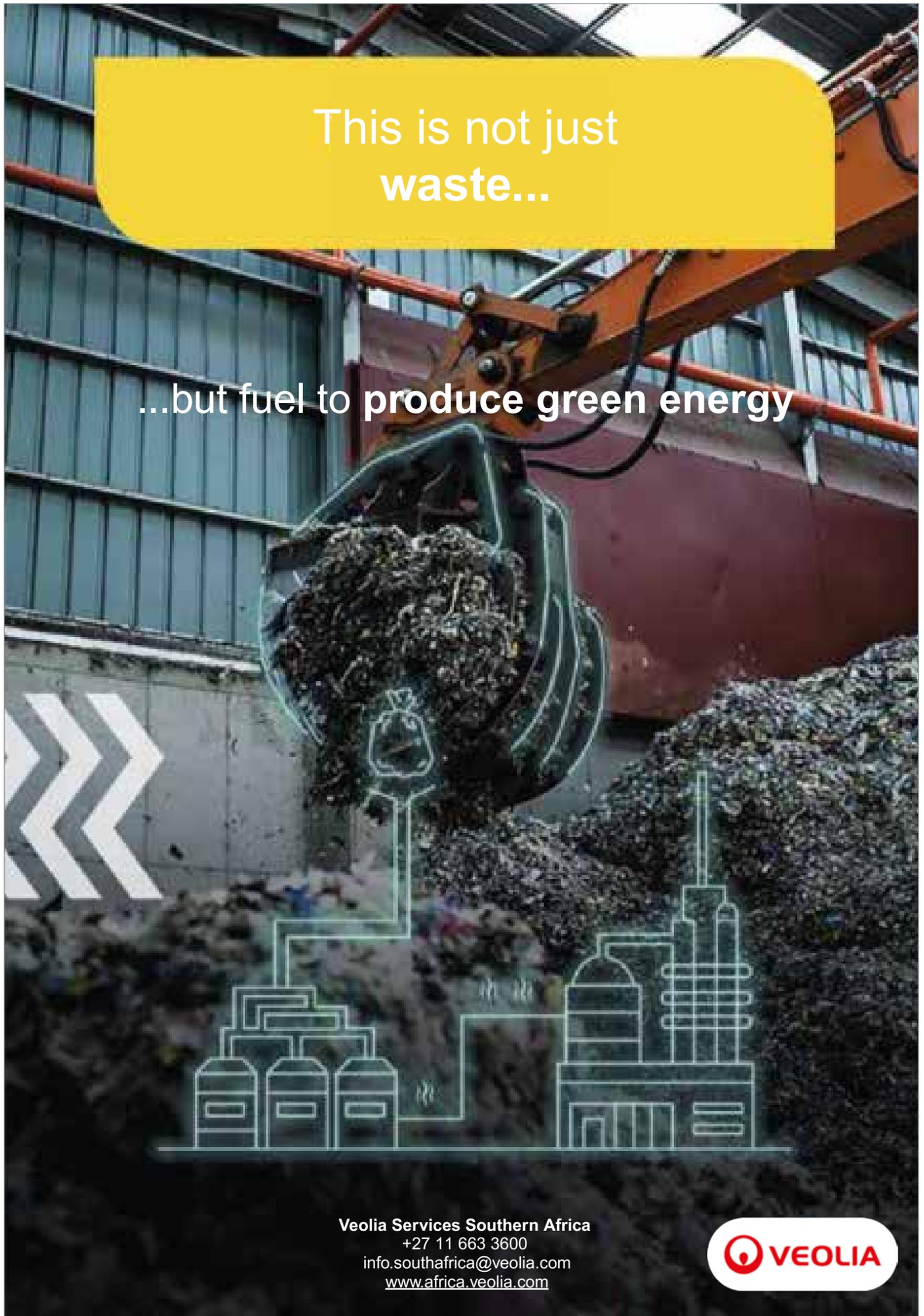
The path forward

As cities worldwide grapple with waste crises and climate commitments, Veolia's leadership offers a proven pathway forward. By integrating biomass alongside traditional waste streams, Veolia enhances re-

newable energy output and carbon reduction potential, aligning with global decarbonisation goals. Veolia's model demonstrates that environmental responsibility and economic viability need not conflict. By transforming waste and biomass from problem

to resource, Veolia exemplifies the innovation and scale required to build truly sustainable communities.

The waste-to-energy sector will only grow in importance. With Veolia at the helm, the future looks cleaner, greener, and more energy-secure.



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It provides smooth airflow, across and from the ceiling to prevent warm air condensation on cold surfaces in cold production rooms. By creating a laminar air layer, it maintains consistent temperatures, keeps ceilings dry, and reduces HVAC size. It efficiently protects products and improves temperature-sensitive working environments.



DryJET-THERMAL®

It's an advanced thermal barrier air curtain that replaces strip curtains. It creates a high-velocity stream of the colder room air across doorways, minimising temperature loss and energy waste. By sealing the space with the spaces own air it maintains cold room integrity, improves

hygiene, and creates smoother operations.



DryZONE® & DryZONE-PLUS®

These permanent dry tunnel systems create a dry air shield at door-ways, preventing moisture and warm air from entering cold or humidity-sensitive areas. DryZONE-PLUS® enhances protection in high-traffic or high-risk environments, with the absence of strip curtains allowing fast operations 24/7 for continuous thermal and moisture defense.



DrySPACE®

It's an advanced airflow solution that keeps processing areas free from condensation and fog. By managing humidity and air movement while cooling the environment, it prevents moisture on surfaces and equipment, ensuring a cleaner, safer working environment while protecting product integrity and reducing maintenance and corrosion risks.



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protection system, focuses on keeping the fast freezing device free from ice improving yield and reducing energy consumption. Further the DefrostMODE® accelerates defrost and dries the inside of the freezer for a clean, dry start-up after washdown.



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- Cut refrigeration costs
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- Ensure food safety and HACCP compliance
- Reduce your environmental footprint



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The refrigeration engine behind South Africa's cold chain

WHILE shoppers see refrigerated display cabinets in stores, the real refrigeration work takes place behind the scenes; in plant rooms and on rooftops, where compressor racks, heat exchangers, and condensers provide the cooling essential to modern food retail. This is Colcoil's area of expertise.

Established in 2013 as a division of Colcab, Colcoil Technologies manufactures the specialised refrigeration equipment that contractors install in commercial and industrial settings. "Colcoil produces heat exchangers and compressor racks; the engines that drive refrigeration," explains Fanie Viljoen, Divisional Director. "This equipment is typically unseen by the public, but it is vital for preserving fresh produce, perishables, and frozen foods."

"We offer both bespoke solutions and a comprehensive range of standard products, primarily serving contractors and installers."

Operating from its Blackheath facility next to Colcab's main factory, Colcoil serves a unique market. "Our customers include refrigeration contractors, OEMs, and consulting engineers," Viljoen says. "We offer both bespoke solutions and a comprehensive range of standard products, primarily serving contractors and installers."

This contractor-focused approach enables Colcoil to serve diverse sectors beyond retail. The company supplies custom units for agriculture, marine and fishing vessels, blast freezers, underground mining cooling, and HVAC applications. "Our extensive experience allows us to provide solutions for distribution warehouses, data centres, food processing plants, hospitals, fruit pack houses, and laboratories," says Viljoen.

With an estimated 35% market share, Colcoil continues to grow faster than its more established parent company. The division expanded its product line five years ago, adding compressor racks and packs to its original heat exchanger offerings.

Recent years have seen significant investment in technology. "We've acquired CNC automated machines, including 3D tube benders and manifold extractors," notes Viljoen. "This automation enhances efficiency, productivity, and prod-

uct quality." Colcoil is also committed to sustainability, offering CO2 and R290a refrigeration systems for environmentally conscious clients. "We supply CO2-compatible equipment, compressor racks, evaporators, and gas

"Colcoil is also committed to sustainability, offering CO2 and R290a refrigeration systems for environmentally conscious clients."

coolers that use natural refrigerants with zero global warming potential," Viljoen says.

"This not only supports retailers' environmental goals but also future-proofs their re-

frigeration plants." The company also meets the growing demand for data centre cooling, driven by the rise of AI in South Africa.

Continuous engagement with international markets ensures Colcoil remains at the forefront of techno-

logical advancements. "We attend trade fairs in Europe and China to stay updated," Viljoen adds. "Our expertise, combined with local manufacturing agility, positions Colcoil for ongoing growth in South Africa's refrigeration sector."

Welcome to



COLCOIL
TECHNOLOGIES
HEAT TRANSFER SOLUTIONS

Colcoil provides advanced refrigeration solutions to the retail, IT, agricultural, industrial, HVAC, and fishing sectors. Our core strength is delivering tailored solutions alongside an extensive product portfolio. Our offerings include DX evaporators, condensers, steam and hot water coils, glycol and chilled water coils, as well as simplex and multiplex refrigeration units and open base condensing units.

We offer a comprehensive selection of standard, angular, and dual-discharge blowers, along with a full range of condensing units and remote condensers. This is further supported by simplex and multiplex refrigeration equipment suitable for both indoor and outdoor applications.

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PARTNERING WITH PEOPLE TO CREATE EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Colcab: local manufacturer powers Africa's refrigeration market

FOR over 30 years, Colcab has been at the forefront of manufacturing display refrigeration cabinets, supporting South Africa's retail food industry. With an estimated 60-65% share of the local

market, Colcab's locally produced solutions are trusted by major retail chains and numerous independent outlets.

Operating from its Blackheath facility in Cape Town, Colcab

delivers both refrigerated and hot display cabinets. The company employs approximately 600 people and runs around-the-clock production to meet customer demand. "We manufacture 95% of

our products locally and can meet the specific needs of each retailer," says Carl Lane, Sales Director at Colcab. "Our product range is extensive and customizable, including options for any

colour or specification required."

While Colcab's primary market is South Africa, the company has expanded into the SADC region, supplying countries such as the DRC, Zambia,

Nigeria, Mauritius, Botswana, and Namibia. Colcab's agility and customization capabilities set it apart from imported alternatives. "All our products are made to order, allowing us to design

bespoke solutions for each customer," Lane explains. "Retailers have unique requirements for the look and feel of their display cabinets, but our engineering ensures consistent performance and optimal airflow."

Colcab remains one of the few global manufacturers using fiberglass tubs in its cabinets, ensuring durability, zero leakage, and rust resistance. "Our products are made in Africa and built to last in African conditions," Lane notes.

Key differentiators for Colcab include product robustness, exceptional service delivery, operational agility, and energy-efficient solutions. "We listen closely to our customers and involve them throughout the process," Lane says. "Our approach is highly customer-centric."

"Our products are made in Africa and built to last in African conditions."

Colcab has been proactive in sustainability, focusing on energy-efficient cabinet designs. "We've introduced acrylic doors to reduce electricity consumption, benefiting both retailers and the national grid," Lane adds. The transition to R290, a natural refrigerant with zero global warming potential, underscores the company's commitment to environmental responsibility.

Innovation is driven by significant investment in research and development. "Our R&D team is constantly working on new designs and technologies," Lane explains. "We have a laboratory that replicates supermarket conditions, allowing us to rigorously test and improve our units."

With branches throughout South Africa and a dedicated export department, Colcab maintains a nationwide presence supported by a skilled sales force. As more retailers consider imported alternatives, Colcab's commitment to local manufacturing and employment remains a key contribution to the South African economy.

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PARTNERING WITH PEOPLE TO CREATE EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Logistics 4.0: How technology is re-engineering retail efficiency in South Africa

By Arno Haigh,
National Logistics
Executive,
The SPAR Group



SOUTH Africa's logistics sector is undergoing its most significant reform in a decade. The long-awaited modernisation of ports, rail, and road infrastructure is finally gaining momentum, promising to unlock billions in economic potential. Yet the real revolution is happening inside the networks that connect every shelf, store, and customer.

For retailers, logistics has evolved from a back-office function to a competitive differentiator. The winners will be those who use data and technology not just to deliver products, but to deliver predictability, speed, and trust.



Resilience as a competitive advantage

The past few years have tested every supply chain worldwide. Load-shedding, water shortages, fuel volatility, and global disruptions have forced South African retailers to rethink what resilience truly means.

At SPAR, those lessons have become the blueprint for our next-generation logistics model, one designed for agility. Whether it's rerouting deliveries during power cuts, providing water to drought-affected communities, or mobilising trucks during national crises, our logistics teams have learned that flexibility is the heartbeat of reliability. We no longer plan for "what if." We plan for "when."

Technology is the new engine room

The logistics transformation at SPAR is as much digital as it is physical. From forecasting and route optimisation to warehouse automation and last-mile delivery, technology is moving the efficiency needle faster

than ever before.

We're deploying predictive analytics to improve accuracy in demand forecasting and replenishment. Real-time route optimisation tools cut kilometres travelled and fuel burned. Inside our distribution centres, automation and AI-driven dashboards are speeding up throughput, reducing handling costs, and enhancing visibility across every product movement.

Our most significant project, the integration of a new tech system across our national network, is redefining how information flows through the business. The next distribution

drought-hit regions or moving donated goods to crisis zones. During COVID-19, our trucks reached every corner of the country. That same spirit of responsiveness defines how we approach every logistical challenge today.

This agility extends to our retailer partnerships. Each store may be independently owned, but they share a common logistics backbone, one that thrives on transparency, data sharing, and mutual trust.

Data: From insight to foresight

The smartest logistics decisions are now made in milliseconds. Data analytics is helping SPAR make faster, smarter, and more transparent decisions, whether it's optimising inventory, managing fuel consumption, or predicting maintenance needs.

Integrated dashboards allow teams to view multiple reports in a single window. Artificial intelligence analyses trends across procurement, transport, and warehouse functions, freeing up human talent to focus on innovation rather than administration. The outcome is not only efficiency but it's also visibility. Every link in the chain sees the same truth, in real time.

Enabling local suppliers, strengthening national reach

A core part of SPAR's logistics ecosystem is its ability to connect local suppliers with national markets. Efficient distribution centres and digital traceability allow small producers to scale sustainably, meeting national demand without compromising on quality or timing.

This "local-to-national" flow strengthens South Africa's food security while driving inclusive economic growth—proof that logistics can be both efficient and equitable.

The future of retail logistics: Smarter, faster, more circular

Globally, the next decade of retail logistics

will be defined by automation, localisation, circularity, and digital traceability. At SPAR, we see opportunity in all four.

Automation will continue to reduce waste and cost. Localisation—through micro-distribution and regional hubs—will bring goods closer to communities. Circular logistics will make reverse supply chains a norm, not a novelty. And traceability, powered by blockchain and AI, will make the entire value chain more transparent, from farm to fork.

We're also exploring smarter delivery windows—extending into late-night operations to cut congestion and fuel usage, while accelerating cash flow between suppliers, retailers, and consumers.

Change, led by people

Technology may drive the transformation, but people sustain it. Our change-management process begins with practical, hands-on training to ensure that every warehouse operator, driver, and planner can use new systems confidently.

The goal isn't to replace experience with software, it's to amplify it. The more intuitive our systems become, the more empowered our teams will be to innovate on the ground.

Reimagining the road ahead

If we could reimagine retail logistics for the next decade, it would be a world of connected systems, extended delivery windows, and zero-friction collaboration between partners. Systems would be intuitive. Data would be instantaneous. Every store, regardless of size or location, would have access to the same level of insight and efficiency.

That's the future SPAR is building—one network, flexible warehousing, one data point at a time.

For more, please visit www.spar.co.za or <https://thespargroup.com>

Shoprite Group marks 100 solar installations – powering the equivalent of 12 300 households annually



THE Shoprite Group has achieved a major sustainability milestone with the installation of its 100th solar photovoltaic (PV) system, 10 years after launching its first solar project in 2015.

With an installed capacity of over 43 300 Kilowatt-peak (kWp), the retailer's solar portfolio ranks among the largest of any South African private company.

Currently, rooftop solar systems generate enough clean electricity to power nearly 12 300 households annually.

"In 2015, we made a long-term commitment to reduce our carbon footprint and play an active role in addressing South Africa's energy challenges," says Sanjeev Raghurib, Chief Sustainability Officer at the Group.

"The installation of our 100th solar PV system reflects the significant progress we've made in recent years. Our accelerated efforts to meet science-based targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and expanding renewable energy are crucial steps on the path to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050."

In the 2025 financial year, 7.2% of the Group's electricity came from renewable sources, up from 6.5% in the 2024 financial year and above the Group's internal tar-

get. The retailer consumed 151 243 MWh of renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions by 137 026 tCO₂e. The Group has also fitted 1 397 refrigerated trailers, which forms part of its fleet operations, with solar panels, saving 3.2 litres of diesel per trailer per day and reducing emissions by an additional 6 000 tCO₂e.

In 2024, the Group became one of the first companies to wheel renewable electricity through the City of Cape Town's grid. It is currently wheeling electricity to eleven sites, including its Home Office in Brackenfell, and is actively seeking further wheeling partners.

"Our focus is on scaling these initiatives by



The retailer continues to explore wheeling projects – where electricity is bought and sold between private parties over the existing transmission grid – to further diversify and expand its renewable energy sources.

These interventions have helped to reduce the retailer's electricity costs, increased efficiency, and enhanced business resilience.

increasing solar installations and expanding wheeling arrangements across our supermarkets and distribution centres," says Raghurib. "We will continue to engage with landlords and partners to unlock greater access to clean energy, particularly in malls where we don't own the rooftops."

<https://www.shoprite-holdings.co.za/>



Teraco CT2 expands Cape Town Data Centre capacity now



By Kris van der Bijl

TERACO'S new CT2 data centre in Cape Town adds 32 MW of capacity across eight data halls, bringing the campus to 50 MW of supported IT load.

The expansion responds to familiar drivers of hyperscale cloud growth, enterprise demand and the rapid rise of AI workloads.

"Teraco's CT2 is connected to a 120 MW solar PV wheeling programme that delivers renewable energy through the national grid."

Yet in the Western Cape context, its cooling and energy design may attract as much attention as its scale.

Think of Cape Town's 2018 "Day Zero" drought as a solid reference point for any infrastructure with significant resource demands when it comes to water in the region.

This makes data centres, which are often associated globally with high energy and water use, operate under particular scrutiny in water-stressed regions.

Cooling without consuming water

Teraco reports that CT2 uses a closed-loop chilled water system that recirculates fluid rather than relying on traditional evaporative cooling.

The system also incorporates free air cooling when ambient temperatures allow and adjusts cooling in real time according to

IT load.

Liquid-based cooling, including liquid-to-liquid designs, can transfer heat more efficiently in high-density environments and reduce reliance on water-intensive methods.

Teraco says its facilities aim for a Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE) of 0.05 L/kWh, which, if achieved, would represent a comparatively low water footprint.

"These new liquid cooling technologies recycle water through a closed loop. Once the system is filled during construction, it will continually circulate water ... without requiring a fresh water supply," said Steve Solomon, Vice President of Data Centre Infrastructure Engineering at Microsoft, who speaks publicly about water-efficient cooling approaches.

But Floris van der Walt, Senior Mechanical Engineer at WSP in Africa, says that liquid cooling systems involve risks such as potential leaks and require specialist skills for on-going monitoring and maintenance.

A colleague, Leon Kleyn, at WSP in Africa, adds that fluid quality control and treatment pose additional technical considerations.

It seems prudent to track the Teraco facility over the course of its run-time to fully assess the value of this technology in the Cape region.

Efficiency under carbon constraints

The new facility is designed for a Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) of 1.30, lower than the company's previous average of 1.47. Reducing PUE can decrease electrici-

ty use for support systems and associated Scope 2 emissions.

Teraco's CT2 is connected to a 120 MW solar PV wheeling programme that delivers renewable energy through the national grid.

Jan Hnizdo, Teraco CEO, has described this, and seemingly Teraco's path, as "creating its own sustainable energy pathway", aligned with a target of reaching a 100% clean energy profile by 2035.

This has regulatory implications in South Africa, where the Carbon Tax Act phases in higher statutory rates between 2026 and 2030.

EY sustainability tax partner Duane Newman has warned that businesses exposed to carbon-intensive electricity will face significantly higher local carbon taxes as the scheme tightens, particularly given South Africa's heavy reliance on coal-fired power.

Implications for future data centre design

While CT2 demonstrates several design approaches intended to reduce water and energy use, independent assessments of performance over time are not yet available.

Technical metrics such as WUE and PUE will be key to understanding whether these designs can serve as a model for future data centre builds in water-scarce and energy-constrained regions.

More technical detail and on-record insights from operators and engineers would help clarify how these designs perform in practice, and whether they are likely to become standard across future builds.

2026 Predictions: evolving data centres for an AI-driven future

By Canninah Dladla, Cluster President for English-speaking Africa at Schneider Electric

THE AI disruptions of the past few years have only been the prologue to what's coming in 2026: AI's full integration into data centre processes and builds. It's a moment we've been building up to ever since OpenAI's ChatGPT brought Artificial Intelligence into the mainstream in late 2022, sending shockwaves through everything from academia and mental health care to every type and size of business.

A truly profound transformation will begin to take hold in 2026 as AI becomes ever more ingrained in every aspect of life and the focus shifts from Large Language Models (LLMs) to AI inferencing. In some ways, 2026 will be the year the rubber truly hits the road when it comes to AI.



Canninah Dladla.

AI rewires functions and industries

According to McKinsey's latest State of AI survey, 78% of organisations use AI in at least one business function; this is up from 72% in early 2024 and 55% the year before. While most adoption remains in sales and marketing, AI is expanding rapidly across manufacturing, healthcare, finance and, crucially, data centres:

- Manufacturers using AI to support demand forecasting have improved accuracy by a median 30 percentage points.
- Hospitals are using predictive AI for billing automation, appointment scheduling and proactive identification of high-risk outpatients.
- Financial institu-



tions are harnessing AI for fraud detection, payment optimisation and risk management.

- Data centres are increasingly using AI-driven cooling systems and predictive analytics to minimise overheating, reduce energy waste and improve grid efficiency through better balancing of electricity supply and demand.

As adoption deepens, AI won't simply support business functions; it will transform industries. For example, AI

They now range from simple chatbot prompts to complex real-time analysis in healthcare, retail, and other industries using autonomous systems and agentic agents. Depending on the deployment and workload, inference environments can range from less than 20kW for compressed or tuned models, up to 140kW per rack for more advanced agentic use cases.

To keep pace, operators will adopt next-generation GPUs such as the NVIDIA Rubin CPX, due in late 2026. And paired with NVIDIA Vera Rubin CPUs and Rubin GPUs in the NVIDIA Vera Rubin NVL144 CPX platform, this system delivers 8 exaflops of AI compute and 7.5x more AI performance than the NVIDIA GB300 NVL72.

Robotics become highly advanced

AI-driven robotics will surge in 2026. Beyond longstanding applications like radiation detection or bomb disposal, AI will expand automation to drones, firefighting systems, search-and-rescue tools, healthcare robotics and even passenger transport.

Again, these technologies require immense processing and network capacity because they rely heavily on high-definition video as an input.

Furthermore, we will see data centre increasingly deploying robotics for security monitoring, server installation, maintenance, cable organisation, drive replacement and optimisation of liquid cooling systems.

Digital twins take centre stage

In 2026, we will see the rise of digital twins as processing power continues to evolve in AI data centres and advanced platforms are developed, like NVIDIA's Omniverse and Cosmos. Data centre

operators will use digital twins to achieve greater efficiency and accelerate development by designing and simulating highly complex physical objects, systems, and processes.

Take for example a data centre's power system itself. ETAP sophisticated modelling technology can create a virtual replica of a data centre's electrical infrastructure through integration with NVIDIA Omniverse.

Liquid cooling goes mainstream

As we are well aware, traditional cooling cannot support next-generation compute density. In 2026, rack densities are expected to reach 240kW per rack, rising to 1MW per rack by 2028, with research exploring the feasibility of 1.5MW per rack.

This makes liquid cooling unavoidable, transitioning from niche to mainstream as high-density AI clusters continue to dominate.

Sustainability remains critical

Power sourcing will continue to be a major challenge in 2024. Operators will rely on diverse energy mixes including natural gas turbines with carbon capture, HVO-fuelled backup generators, wind, solar, geothermal and battery storage.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), renewables currently supply 27% of electricity consumed by data centres and are expected to meet nearly half of additional demand growth through 2030.

Expect 2026 to be a critical year, where AI's impact moves from a disruptive force to a foundational element of business and technology. As AI reshapes every layer of digital infrastructure, tomorrow's data centres will not simply support technology; they will enable intelligence itself.

Connecting South Africa's chemical value chain for safer, more sustainable growth

THE chemical sector is intricately woven into every aspect of daily life. From fuels that power vehicles and move people and goods across thousands of kilometres, to the chemicals that enable the safe and responsible production of food, pharmaceuticals and packaging, the sector is integral to a functioning society.

volatility, geopolitical uncertainty and rising expectations around compliance, it no longer makes sense for businesses to go it alone," says Deidré Penfold, Executive Director of the Chemical and Allied Industries' Association (CAIA), which represents the interests of more than 130 South African organisations.

trade, warehousing and waste handling. CAIA's membership accounts for 2.4% of national GDP and 12.2% of manufacturing GDP, with annual production output of R951 billion and R271 billion in value added. "This economic footprint means that CAIA is well positioned to represent both fundamental and complex issues of the sector as a single, credible industry voice," says Penfold.

proving safety, health, environmental (SHE), and security performance across all operations. It goes beyond regulatory compliance, promoting sustainable development, transparency, and stakeholder engagement.

Under the umbrella of Responsible Care® is SQAS-AFRICA (Safety & Quality Assessment for Sustainability - AFRICA), a standardised evaluation system for logistics service providers. CAIA's independent and certified auditors assess the performance of companies in terms of safety, health, environment, quality and corporate social responsibility.

More recently, CAIA has developed a SAFETY SMART campaign. Penfold notes that the campaign aligns with CAIA's objectives for a responsible sector that places value on the lives and well-being of



the thousands of people who serve it. "The SAFETY SMART themes aim to encourage a proactive safety mindset built on teamwork, shared responsibility, and prevention. By thinking about hazards, risks, and consequences before acting, we can put safety first and ensure everyone goes home safely, every day."

CAIA hosts several webinars, training sessions and industry events that cover a range of topics, process safety is a particular focus.

Collective impact, responsible resilience

Penfold concludes that businesses seeking to remain resilient in an increasingly volatile

and complex environment should consider engaging with CAIA. "The need for a collective voice is now paramount. By strengthening safety and stewardship while supporting growth and competitiveness, CAIA helps ensure the chemical and allied industries remain a trusted enabler of South Africa's economy."

"This economic footprint means that CAIA is well positioned to represent both fundamental and complex issues of the sector as a single, credible industry voice..."

It is for this reason that the South African chemical sector is one where safety, reliability and public trust are non-negotiable.

"Amid economic

Representing a sector that is in every element of life

CAIA's membership and affiliations demonstrate the breadth of the chemical and allied industries. Its membership base extends from primary, commodity and speciality chemicals to downstream manufacturing of, among others, plastics and consumer products, fertilisers and agricultural inputs. Added to this are service providers in logistics, storage, distribution,

Our focus on advocacy and ongoing interaction with regulators and policymakers ensures that members gain early insight into policy shifts, international best practice and compliance trends," explains Penfold.

Beyond regulatory compliance

Responsible Care® is a global, voluntary initiative by the chemical industry aimed at im-

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MetPac-SA: Advancing metal packaging recycling through industry collaboration



Dr Kishan Singh, CEO of MetPac-SA.

AS South Africa's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework continues to reshape the packaging landscape, industry bodies play a critical role in helping businesses navigate compliance while driving real environmental outcomes. MetPac-SA, the Metal Packaging Association of South Africa, has emerged as a key catalyst in this space, guiding the metal packaging industry towards a more circular and

sustainable future.

MetPac-SA is a registered Non-Profit Company and is formally registered with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) as a Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO). Under EPR Registration Number 19/7/5/P/PRO/20210720/005, MetPac-SA is responsible for implementing South Africa's metal packaging EPR strategy in alignment with Section 18 of the Na-

tional Environmental Management: Waste Act (NEMWA).

As the recognised PRO for metal packaging, MetPac-SA represents producers, brand owners, importers and converters of aluminium and tinplate (ferrous) packaging in South Africa, excluding 210-litre drums. From January 2024, its scope was expanded to include aluminium and steel aerosol packaging.

MetPac-SA's mission is to establish the met-

al packaging industry as a meaningful contributor to sustainable development by investing in post-consumer metal packaging recovery and reutilisation. Through collaboration across the value chain, the organisation works to improve collection, recycling and data integrity, while supporting South Africa's transition to a circular economy.

"Extended Producer Responsibility is not just about meeting regulatory requirements. It's about industry taking collective responsibility for the full lifecycle of its products and investing in systems that deliver environmental, social and economic value," says Dr Kishan Singh, CEO of MetPac-SA.

Delivering value through membership

Membership of MetPac-SA provides businesses with a compliant, transparent and credible route to meeting their EPR obligations, while unlocking shared value that would be difficult to achieve individually. Members benefit from centralised EPR reporting to the DFFE, audited financial governance, industry representation and targeted investment in collection, recycling and awareness initiatives.

These benefits were reinforced by the results of MetPac-SA's first-ever Member Satisfaction Survey, which was conducted at the end of 2025. Results and feedback by members showed strong confidence in the organisation's performance across all key areas.

Members rated regulatory compliance particularly highly, with the majority agreeing that MetPac-SA is meeting DFFE's EPR

targets across major material streams. Waste collection and recycling initiatives also scored strongly, reflecting the organisation's partnerships with buy-back centres, recyclers, re-melters and municipalities.

Support for waste picker integration, including personal protective equipment, training and service-fee payments, was also recognised, alongside high levels of trust in MetPac-SA's financial transparency and governance.

Driving circular outcomes

Beyond compliance, MetPac-SA's work focuses on building long-term recovery and recycling systems for metal packaging, supported by education, innovation and data-driven decision-making.

MetPac-SA is open to membership applications from all role-players in the metal packaging value chain that place more than 10 tonnes of metal packaging on the market annually, in line with the EPR Regulations. Only declared member tonnages are reported to the DFFE for Section 18 EPR purposes.

As EPR continues to mature in South Africa, MetPac-SA demonstrates how organised industry collaboration can deliver compliance, credibility and measurable environmental impact. "Metal packaging is infinitely recyclable without loss of quality. Our role is to ensure that the systems are in place to keep that material in circulation and out of landfill," Dr Singh concludes.

For more information visit www.metpacsa.org.za

Shaping A Sustainable Tomorrow

Sustainable and Responsible Metal Packaging Solutions



MetPac-SA is dedicated to leading the way in creating a sustainable future by focusing on sustainable metal packaging. As the registered Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment for metal packaging, we take our sustainability pledge seriously. Here's how we're doing our part:

- **EPR Compliance:** We offer our members Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislative and regulatory compliance support whilst they focus on their core business.
- **Recycle & Reuse:** We promote responsible post-consumer metal packaging collection and recycling of metal packaging across South Africa. This conserves natural resources, reduces the environmental impact and promotes the transition to a circular economy.
- **Stakeholder Acceptance:** We collaborate with key stakeholders, including the South African Government Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and the metal packaging industry, to devise solutions that are both environmentally sustainable and acceptable in their form and operation.

www.metpacsa.org.za

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THE NEXT GENERATION

Internships, Skills & Development Programmes

FLS Training Academy strengthens Africa's mining skills base with NAMB accreditation

FROM apprentices to graduate engineers, the FLS Training Academy in Chloorkop, Gauteng, has been building its capabilities and linkages to strengthen the mining sector's skills base - not only in South Africa but across Africa and the globe.

Demonstrating FLS's commitment to skills development is the facility's recent accreditation by the National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB) as an official assessment centre for artisan testing. According to Steve Parkinson, Head of the FLS Training Academy, this has been another important step in its mandate to "develop exceptional skills in Africa for Africa".

"This accreditation allows us to conduct full testing for three vital trade categories: fitters, turners and fitter-and-turners," Parkinson explains. "It means we can now train, assess and qualify both FLS apprentices and those from other companies in the region, creating a regional hub of technical excellence."

He notes that this status positions the FLS Training Academy as a key player in training and qualifying artisans for the mining and minerals sector - not only within FLS but across the broader industry. The outcome is the culmination of years of focused investment in technical capability and educational quality.

Established in 2018, the FLS Training Academy has become central to the company's business strategy and a cornerstone of its social responsibility commitments. Beyond producing a pipeline of skilled artisans, the well-equipped facility supports FLS's goal of maintaining its BBBEE Level 1 status and

advancing its Women in Mining initiative.

"We are proud that over half of our learners are women," he says. "It is part of our commitment to diversity and empowerment, ensuring that technical careers - especially in traditionally male dominated industries like mining - are accessible and attractive to everyone."

In 2025, for example, 33 of the 61 students were women and a majority of the total were from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. At any given time, the Chloorkop facility hosts between 60 and 90 learners, offering a wide range of programmes - from apprenticeships and learnerships to graduate internships, employee development and customer training.

"Our technical apprenticeships focus on trades such as mechanical fitting and metal machining, providing practical, real-world experience across the FLS workshop, machining and field services departments," Parkinson says.

"Learners spend their first 11 months at the facility gaining foundational skills before moving into operational environments."

Partnerships also play a key role in the FLS Training Academy's impact, he explains. For instance, it collaborates with private vocational training college Sol-Tech, hosting millwright apprentices for practical field experience. The facility's two-year commercial apprenticeships - known as learnerships in South Africa - include specialisations in supply chain, information technology, business administration and health and safety.

"Our apprentice programme has become well



The FLS Training Academy's structured development programmes ensure learners are equipped with the skills needed for long-term careers in the mining and industrial sectors.

recognised within FLS, to the extent that we have been requested to assist other regions with their apprenticeship programmes," he says. "There is also scope to deploy our apprentices in other FLS service centres globally, as and when required."

Wherever possible, the latest digital technologies are leveraged to enhance the learning experience, including 'virtual reality welding' through sophisticated equipment that records results as if a conventional welder were being used.

The FLS Training Acade-

my is also making advances in the professional registration of graduate engineers. Collaboration is ongoing with the Engineering Council of South Africa to become an accredited training facility for the development of professional engineers.

"We have already designed a development programme and logbook for this purpose," he says.

"Our aim is to ensure that graduates receive systematic support for their engineering careers in the mining industry - but also for general industry."

Shoprite Group extends 2026 bursary intake as applications open

THE Shoprite Group has opened applications for its 2026 bursary programme, offering financial support and a guaranteed pathway into employment for ambitious students in Retail Business Management, Accounting, Supply Chain and Logistics, and Biological and Agricultural Sciences.

The bursary covers tuition and accommodation, includes a monthly grocery allowance, provides wellbeing support services through the Group's Employee Assistance Programme, and incorporates a work-back agreement ensuring a direct transition from graduation into employment within the company.

Thoriso Sethosa, a bursary graduate, joined the Group after the retailer funded her BAcc (CA stream) degree. She is currently completing her chartered accountant training programme, rotating across key business units to develop the skills required to qualify as a CA(SA) and progress within the organisation.

"The Shoprite bursary didn't just fund my studies - it gave me access to the industry and a clear pathway into a career I can grow in," says Sethosa. "It placed me in a data-driven environment that's equipping me with the skills I need for my future, not just my first job."

In 2025, for the fourth con-

secutive year, the Group was named Employer of Choice in the retail sector, receiving the GradStar Students' Choice Award, and was also recognised as the 2024 Employer of Choice in the retail category for the second year in a row by the South African Graduate Employers Association (SAGEA) Employer Awards. The Group is further certified as a Top Employer. In the last financial year, it invested over R19 million in its bursary programme, funding more than 250 students.

"Access to education alone is not enough. This bursary programme is about converting potential into long-term careers," says Lindsey Joseph,

Head of Group Talent Solutions at the Group. "By linking funding directly to employment, we are strengthening our talent pipeline and delivering measurable impact where it matters most - jobs, skills and economic participation."

The Shoprite Group bursary programme is helping to uplift lives every day by supporting education, building workplace-ready skills, and creating long-term career opportunities for South Africa's youth.

Click here for more information about the bursary programme and how to apply. Applications close on 31 May 2026.

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The forgotten art of stewardship

By Chantelle Botha



2026 is the year of the middle manager. We're entering a high-stakes game that will be won or lost in the battleground of hearts and minds. Gone are the negotiations across boardroom tables – success now depends on who you are and how you show up in an increasingly complex world.

If you're responsible for making things happen, but you're not the one setting the final direction or controlling all the resources, you're middle management. Despite what your business card says. Organisations rely on the people who are creating the results that satisfy their stakeholders. That's you.

This is the forgotten art of stewardship. You've been entrusted with something precious – not just outcomes, but people, and their potential. All depending on how you model engagement. The biblical parable of the talents wasn't about money, it was about what you do with what you've been given. The servant who buried his talent out of fear got fired. But the ones who invested and multiplied their talents were celebrated for their willingness to act, not for the size of their results.

Middle managers are the stewards of organisational vitality. Asking for more resources or broader authority feels like it might be the solution in a deadline driven world, but it's a trap. Stewardship asks what you can do with what's in your hands right now?

The Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2025 Report reveals that managers influence 70% of employee engagement, yet their own engagement is falling. Automation and AI have expanded our efficiency, but productivity still lags behind declining employee engagement. The same study notes that only 21% of employees are engaged globally, making productivity a human sustainability issue rather than an operational one.

The future of work won't be driven solely by technology, but by distinctly human skills. We pay lip service to these traits that are inherent within us, but we conveniently forget they're ours to steward: creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, motivation,

curiosity, courage and lifelong learning.

These "skills" are built out of self-awareness – they're the foundation for effective leadership and the key driver of culture and engagement. While 95% of people believe they're self-aware, only about 10% actually are (Psychology Today).

You can neither steward others nor your desired outcomes if you don't know yourself. Self-awareness practices, whether 360 feedback, coaching, reflection, or mindfulness, aren't just personal development. They're stewardship tools. They reveal the blind spots that undermine trust, the patterns that bury potential, the gifts you're not using.

This brings us back to the parable reminding us that stewardship has nothing to do with what you have and everything to do with what you do with it. Middle managers today face the same choice the servants did. Will you bury your influence out of frustration with limited resources? Or will you invest what you have – your attention, your curiosity, your willingness to be vulnerable – and watch it multiply?

When leaders commit to understanding first themselves and then their people, they unlock the engagement, trust and psychological safety that drive sustainable engagement and productivity.

This is stewardship in action. And 2026 will be won by the middle managers who refuse to bury their influence. The middle managers who lead with self-awareness, invest in their people, and multiply what

they've been entrusted with.

Showing up and acting courageously with what you have, not what you wish you had, gets rewarded.

So what are you doing with what's in your hands?



Chantelle Botha, known globally as *The Catalyst*, is an Identity Architect and founder of Phoenix. Author of *Phoenix Rising* and *Connect, Lead, Succeed*, she equips leaders to steward their influence with curiosity, courage, and confidence. Her straight-shooting style challenges middle managers to stop waiting for more and start acting with what they have.

Ready to ignite sustainable leadership?
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THE BUSINESS TRAVELLER THE EXECUTIVE GUIDE TO STRATEGIC TRAVEL

Corporate travel enters its strategic era

By Adrian Ephraim

After years of disruption, South African business travel isn't just rebounding in 2026 — it's being reimaged. Corporate travel budgets are rising, but this is not a return to pre-pandemic habits. Companies are travelling less often but more deliberately, focusing on trips that deliver measurable value, while employees exert greater influence over decisions around flexibility, wellbeing and work-life balance.

"Adding leisure time to work trips improves wellbeing, job satisfaction and overall ROI on travel spend."

The numbers tell the story

Flight Centre Travel Group's State of the Market survey shows that 46% of EMEA customers plan to increase travel spend this financial year, up from 39% last year. Yet the composition of that spending signals a clear shift. According to Mummy Mafojane, GM of FCM South Africa, conferences and events now account for 63% of business travel, followed by meetings at 53%.

"Companies are investing in culture, client relationships and talent retention," Mafojane explains. "That means duty of care,

wellness and real value now matter more than ever."

Weekly short-haul flights are increasingly difficult to justify. Instead, corporates are embracing trip stacking - grouping meetings, piggybacking on events and clustering regional commitments - to reduce costs, emissions and traveller fatigue. The pandemic proved that remote meetings work, raising the bar for travel to justify its return on investment, conditions and impact on employee wellbeing.

Wellness moves to the centre

Traveller wellness has shifted from a perk to a business imperative. Research from the University of Pretoria identifies family responsibilities, logistics, health concerns and personal safety as major stressors for South African business travellers. Companies that address these through flexible policies and robust duty-of-care frameworks report higher engagement and productivity.

This is becoming unavoidable. Ipsos research shows that 71% of South Africans experience overwhelming stress levels. Progressive employers now design trips around wellbeing, prioritising reasonable flight times, quality accommodation and space for recovery — recognising that exhausted employees do not deliver value.

Bleisure becomes standard

The blending of business and leisure trav-

el is no longer optional, particularly for younger professionals. Adding leisure time to work trips improves wellbeing, job satisfaction and overall ROI on travel spend.

Cape Town is well-positioned to benefit from this shift. Its appeal as a meetings and incentives destination, combined with improved air connectivity - including South African Airways' plans to expand its fleet and establish Cape Town as a second hub - strengthens its attractiveness for extended stays.

Technology as an enabler

Technology is playing a critical role in enabling smarter travel. Predictive systems can rebook disrupted flights before cancellations are announced, while AI-powered tools like FCM's 24/7 travel assistant provide real-time policy guidance and personalised support. For 2026, travel buyers are prioritising real-time itinerary management, automated expense tracking and predictive analytics.

Rethinking value beyond price

FCM's white paper, *Should Price Still Be*



Your Guide in 2026?, argues that success is no longer defined by cost alone. Instead, companies are measuring traveller experience, safety, wellness, sustainability and the strength of supplier partnerships.

This shift is reinforced by regulation. South Africa's Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 introduces mandatory emissions measurement and carbon budgets, pushing companies to prioritise direct flights, green-certified hotels and ESG-aligned partners.

As business travel matures in 2026, success is defined less by cutting costs and more by optimising experiences. The most resilient programmes put people first, deliver tangible outcomes and align business goals with sustainability - proving that human-centred travel is now a strategic advantage, not a luxury.



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