

Green industries to aid SA's economic recovery

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries has published the regulatory framework for extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes as part of government's effort to contribute towards the economic recovery plan.



Image source: www.pexels.com

“These EPR schemes are part of the Reconstruction and Economic Recovery Plan recently announced by the president as key contributors towards green economy initiatives,” the minister of environment, forestry and fisheries, Barbara Creecy, said on Thursday, 12 November.

The president presented the plan, aimed at helping the economy recover from the effects of coronavirus, in parliament, last month.

Its objectives are job creation, primarily through aggressive infrastructure investment and mass employment programmes; reindustrialise the economy, focusing on growing small businesses, and accelerating economic reforms to unlock investment and growth. It is also aimed at fighting crime and corruption and improving the capability of the state.

The department also published the Plastics and Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility notice to provide for the post-consumer management of waste plastic products.



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Collaborative exercise

“The establishment of an EPR scheme is informed by collaborative arrangements between the industry; government; small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and waste pickers.

“Annual targets for post-consumer waste management have been set and the producers will be accounting to the country each year on progress towards meeting these targets.

“We need to applaud the efforts of those producers who have committed these targets, even before the regulations were published. This EPR regulatory framework eliminates free riders in the system,” the minister said.

She was addressing the Plastic Colloquium Feedback Session on Thursday in a virtual engagement aimed at taking stock of what has happened since the hosting of the inaugural colloquium last year.

Plastics and the plastic products industry contributed around R70bn to South Africa’s economy in 2019. According to Plastics SA, an estimated 60,000 people are employed in the plastics industry.

“Steps are being taken to finalise the Plastic Sector Master Plan, together with other key stakeholders, as part of a social compact aimed at supporting the long-term growth, development and sustainability of the plastics sector,” Creecy said.



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Plastic sustainability, circularity

One of the themes identified as part the draft Plastics Master Plan revolves around plastic sustainability and circularity of the economy, where waste is neither landfilled nor leaks into the environment, but is recycled and recovered.

“This Plastics Master Plan acknowledges that the circular economy is central in order to reduce the negative impact of plastic waste on our country and its people.

“The Master Plan makes use of industrial policy to address plastic pollution as part of sustainable consumption and production, and supports the sustained growth of the secondary materials economy,” the minister said.

The department will be using government’s District Model to expand and strengthen municipal interventions on keeping South Africa clean.

“The department is also presently assisting municipalities to apply for the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) in order to procure compactor trucks that aid in waste collection and landfill compactors for operation of landfill sites,” said Creecy.

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