



**HULAMIN TO SELL  
EXTRUSIONS UNIT  
FOR RIOM**

**PAGE 3**



**AGRICULTURE &  
AGRO-PROCESSING**

**PAGE 5**



**AUTOMATION &  
ROBOTICS**

**PAGE 6**

## PARTNERSHIP BLUEPRINT

# SKILLS CRISIS DRIVES TECH INTO SCHOOLS

**S**OUTH Africa's manufacturing sector is facing mounting pressure to develop technical talent as automation and artificial intelligence accelerate globally. Industry estimates suggest that approximately 87% of companies are experiencing difficulties in recruiting workers with robotics and automation expertise, according to Marisa Jacobs, MD of Xpatweb, quoting the company's latest critical skills Survey.

By 2030, robotic and automation technologies could displace more than 500,000 manufacturing jobs. Within the next four years, nearly 58% of South African businesses are expected to require skills in programming, equipment maintenance and AI interaction.

Private sector partnerships are proving essential for schools and tertiary institutions working to meet these challenges, where the latest hardware, as well as teachers with the necessary expertise, are difficult to source.

In Durban, global automotive components manufacturer Motherson has strengthened its investment in South Africa's future workforce by partnering with Durban High School (DHS) to fund a new three-storey education facility focused on robotics, electronics and mechatronics.

The company, alongside its sister company Vacuform 2000, joined education and business stakeholders to celebrate the official opening of the building, which will house three specialised programmes, including the Robotics, Electronics and Mechatronics (REM) initiative.

DHS's new building also houses the Academic Support Centre and the Brave Generation Academy, expanding DHS's multi-nodal education model designed to cater for learners with different academic strengths and developmental needs.

For Motherson, the project aligns



*Raffik Sayyed, Motherson South Africa senior vice president and DHS headmaster Tony Pinheiro celebrate the official opening of the school's Robotics, Electronics and Mechatronics facility.*

closely with the growing demand for robotics and automation skills across the manufacturing sector, where companies are increasingly struggling to source qualified talent.

"The team at Motherson is proud to have partnered with the DHS Foundation Trust in the funding of the new building housing the REM programme," said Raffik Sayyed, Motherson South Africa senior vice president.

"As a global organisation that is investing in South Africa, Motherson applauds the progressive approach DHS has to education in its mission to prepare boys for the future. We have been impressed with their legacy of success in academics, sport, culture and business."

"Motherson has a developmental approach to business," said Sayyed. "Wherever we operate in the world, we invest in developing local talent and skills. Through our head office in India, we recruit directly from the technical colleges and work with students and learners to develop the

skills within the South African economy.

### TEACHING MODEL

As part of the broader initiative, Lead HR partnered with the National Skills Fund to place graduate interns as teaching assistants for the programme's practical training component.

"We picked up quite early that for the robotics programme to succeed, the staff member needed the practical support of a graduate intern with a background in Electronic Engineering," said Raj Moodley, managing director of Lead HR. "The Department of Basic Education has given its support to the programme. Our intention is to convey the lessons from this project. The department is interested in the potential to replicate the programme in other schools."

### EDUCATION INNOVATION

Speaking at the opening event on 22 April, DHS headmaster Tony Pinheiro said the school's partnership with private-sector investors reflects a commitment to leading education innovation. This approach has resulted in a number of DHS boys being offered vacation work and internships with businesses such as Motherson, with a view towards employment post-school.

"We are not waiting for others to show us the way, but rather, we are committed to leading the way in shaping the future of education to prepare our boys to lead in the future world of work," said Pinheiro.

Representatives from corporate partners, the DHS Foundation, FNB, Standard Bank, the Moses Kotane Research Institute, Durban University of Technology and the Department of Basic Education attended the launch event.

### PRIVATE-SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

The project has also attracted support from other corporate donors, including Conlog, Witon Chemicals, Direct Insight Consulting, TMS 360 SA, Sabvest, and ZTS.

Conlog donated products for the learners to use in their practicals, with a long-term view of students participating in vacation work at the company based in Dube Trade Port.

Private partners worked with the school's leadership, Lead HR and Kingsley Elliot Consulting to help turn the vision of a technical educational node into reality. The program has already attracted interest from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education.

Winston Owen, managing director of Kingsley Elliot, said private-sector research played a critical role through its financial support and in identifying future scarce technical

The first cohort of learners is already in class, with Grade 8 Learners currently enjoying Robotics lessons. This is the first intake and will thus continue into Grade 9. In 2028, these learners will have the option to choose Robotics as one of the subjects they will study to Matric.

Currently, Coding and Robotics has not been formally gazetted for the Matric phase in public schools. The Department of Basic Education is still focusing on the foundation and senior phases to build the necessary pipeline before making it a full Matric elective. This is despite the subject's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) being officially gazetted in June 2024.

Private schools have moved significantly faster, with the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) integrating these skills into existing frameworks and then spinning them into specialist subjects.

### GLOBAL PARTNERS

Founded in India in 1975, Motherson operates in 41 countries and has steadily expanded its South African footprint. The company first invested in Rosslyn in 2009 before opening a second operation in Isipingo in 2013. It serves as a global Tier 1 supplier, providing full-system automotive solutions to major vehicle manufacturers.

Conlog holds more than 200 patents and trademarks. It is a proudly South African company using an array of local materials. Conlog has headquarters at the Dube Trade Port in Durban and a presence in over 58 countries across Africa, the Middle East and South America.

Its global footprint includes a base of over 17 million smart meters and prepaid solutions, servicing over 90 utilities and providing access to power for more than 50 million households.

# Commission reviews regulations to cut red tape, boost growth

**I**N an effort to improve the ease of doing business, strengthen the competitiveness of the economy and support inclusive growth, the Competition Commission has launched a review of regulations.

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa highlighted the need to cut red tape and streamline rules, echoing concerns from market inquiries and stakeholders seeking a modern, SME-friendly regulatory system.

While regulations protect consumers, address market failures and support development, overly restrictive or poorly implemented rules can raise costs, delay entry and limit growth, reducing competition, investment and jobs.

The Commission will assess laws, policies and licensing frameworks that hinder entry or expansion, and examine market concentration, vertical integration and exclusionary practices, including impacts on historically disadvantaged

groups. Findings will inform reforms to remove barriers. Businesses and stakeholders are invited to submit evidence of regulatory obstacles, such as complex licensing, restrictive permits, monopolistic rules, excessive standards or implementation failures.

Submissions should detail the regulation, its impact on competition and practical reform proposals. Entries must include contact details and be emailed to [regulation@compcom.co.za](mailto:regulation@compcom.co.za) by 5 June 2026.

## FEATURES



**MINING & QUARRYING**  
PAGE 7

**PETROCHEMICALS, OIL & GAS**  
PAGE 9



**SUPPLY, DISTRIBUTION & WAREHOUSING**  
PAGE 11

**WATER & EFFLUENT MANAGEMENT**  
PAGE 13

**COMPANY & PRODUCT NEWS**  
PAGE 15

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# Hulamin to sell extrusions unit for R10m in strategic shift

**P**MB-based aluminium producer, Hulamin, has agreed to sell its extrusions business to Norsaf ERS in a R10 million cash deal, as the aluminium group sharpens its focus on core operations.

The transaction, concluded through Hulamin operations, forms part of a broader strategy to exit non-core assets and redirect capital and management attention to its rolled products division, according to a company SENS announcement.

Hulamin extrusions, which manufactures aluminium products for the automotive, transport and engineering sectors, was identified as non-core following a group-wide strategic review.

As part of the deal structure, Hulamin will assume responsibility for the unit's trade creditors, while trade debtors, cash and stock will be transferred to the seller ahead of the



Hulamin extrusions division. Image: Hulamin

sale. Stock will be managed under a consignment arrangement, with total related proceeds capped at R100 million. The R10 million purchase price will be paid

in cash on closing, backed by a bank guarantee from the purchaser.

Despite the change in ownership, Hulamin extrusions will continue operating from its current premises for at least 12 months under a lease and shared services agreement, with an option to extend for a further year.

Financially, the division has been under pressure, reporting a net asset value of R44.9 million and a net loss of R35.7 million for the year ended December 2025.

Hulamin said proceeds from the disposal, together with collections from debtors and other transaction flows, will be used to settle creditors, reduce group debt and support working capital.

The deal remains subject to approval by competition authorities, with a target date of 31 July 2026. It does not require shareholder approval.

# South32 and Eskom advance electricity talks for Hillside Aluminium smelter

**S**OUTH32 and Eskom are advancing discussions on a long-term electricity solution for the Hillside Aluminium Smelter in KwaZulu Natal, targeted to commence in 2031, subject to compliance with all regulatory requirements.

Both organisations have reaffirmed their shared ambition to develop and deliver a long-term energy solution that supports Hillside's competitiveness, and contributes to regional economic stability and industrial growth while aligning with South Africa's broader decarbonisation objectives.

Eskom Group chief executive Dan Marokane said: "Eskom values the longstanding partnership with South32 and the important role Hillside Aluminium plays in South Africa's industrial economy. Through this joint process we are working to develop a long-term energy solution that supports industrial competitiveness while advancing South Africa's transition to a lower-carbon electricity system."

"By exploring innovative mechanisms to integrate renewable energy into the grid with appropriate firming solutions, this collaboration has the potential not only to secure the future of Hillside but also to contribute to strengthening the resilience and sustainability of the national electricity system for the benefit of all South Africans."



An aerial view of Hillside Aluminium. Image: South32

## JOINT WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED

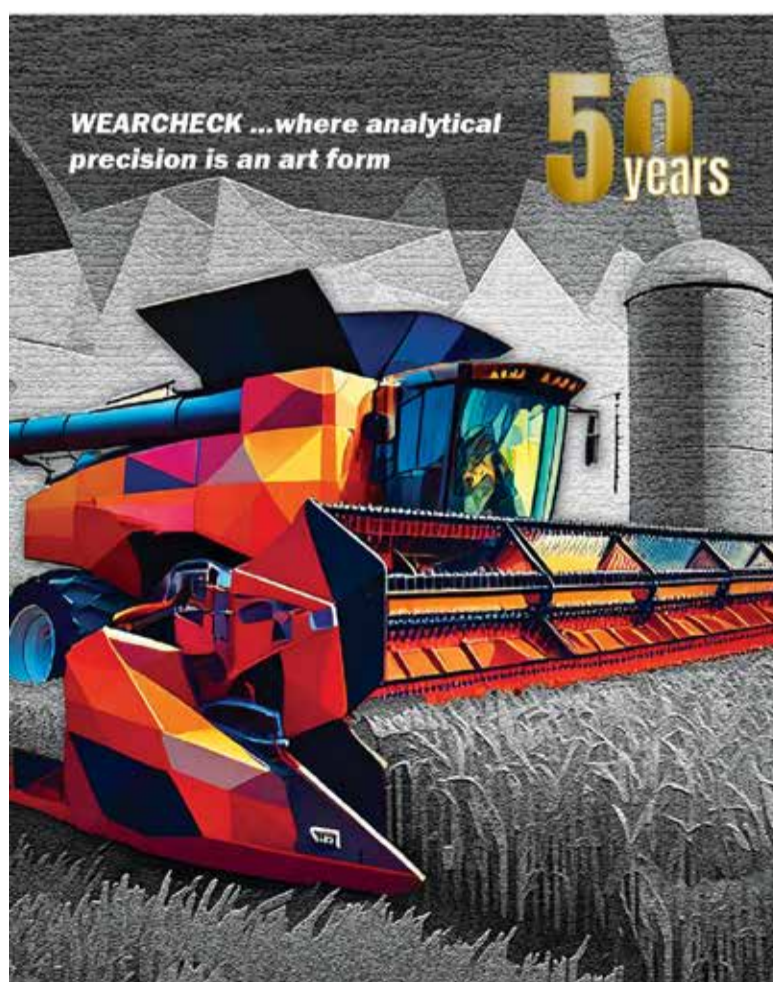
To support this ambition, South32 and Eskom have established a joint working group to explore mechanisms that can bring competitively priced renewable energy into the national grid, backed up by affordable firming capacity within the existing regulatory framework. While this work will help support the long-term energy needs of Hillside, the solutions being assessed have the potential to benefit Eskom and its broader customer base.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HILLSIDE

This marks an important step towards supporting the future of one of Southern Africa's most important industrial businesses. Hillside supports a total of 3,650 direct and indirect jobs, contributes to an estimated 29,000 jobs across the economy, and plays a key role in supplying aluminium to the local downstream industry.

South32 chief operating officer Noel Pillay said: "As Hillside celebrates 30 years of operation this year, we are collaborating with the government and Eskom to secure its future for decades to come."

"We have made a solid start. It is important we continue this momentum, working towards a viable, low-carbon energy solution for Hillside from 2031, when the current electricity contract expires."



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# KwaZulu-Natal is open for business and the numbers back that up”

**S**OUTH Africa's automotive sector is brimming with opportunity and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is positioning itself at the forefront. That was the central message from the Automechanika Johannesburg Q2 CEO Breakfast, held on 17 April 2026 at the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Convened by Messe Frankfurt South Africa and sponsored by Nedbank, the event gathered senior executives, policymakers, and industry specialists ahead of Automechanika Johannesburg 2026, the flagship trade fair for the automotive aftermarket.

## A PROVINCE FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

Meschack Zwane, company economist at Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal, opened with a compelling picture of provincial momentum. KZN's GDP grew 1.4% in 2025, underpinned by a 21% rebound in agriculture and a surge in vehicle and parts exports of more than 50% year-on-year. Business confidence reached a record 60 points in Q4 2025.

"KwaZulu-Natal is open for business and the

numbers back that up. Belgium has overtaken the United States as our largest export partner, and the UAE recorded export growth of nearly 180 per cent," Zwane said. "These are not incremental gains; they signal a seismic shift in how the world sees KZN as an automotive hub. The conditions are right. The question is whether we are bold enough to seize them."

## NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Tshetlhe Litheko, chief policy officer at naamsa, highlighted South Africa's production of 618,077 vehicles in 2025 and domestic sales growth of 15.7%. While acknowledging a 22.8% decline in vehicle exports, he framed it as a catalyst for strategic repositioning. "South Africa has the industrial base, the policy framework and the talent to be a serious player in the global transition to new energy vehicles," he said.

"The 150 percent investment allowance for Electric Vehicle (EV) production is a direct signal from government that this is a priority. Disruption creates space for those who are prepared and South Africa has every reason

to be prepared."

## FINANCING THE FUTURE

Takatso Sello, Senior Manager for Manufacturing at Nedbank, addressed cost pressures facing manufacturers while making a strong case for sustainable operations.

"The manufacturers who will thrive are those who treat sustainability not as a compliance exercise, but as a competitive advantage. Nedbank is committed to being a financing partner for that transition because the business case is clear, and the window of opportunity is now."

## BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AFTERMARKET

Anton Fiets, executive manager for Industry Development at the AIDC, highlighted the aftermarket as one of South Africa's most significant growth opportunities.

The AIDC's Township Automotive Hubs initiative provides workshop bays, diagnostic tools and technical training to township-based

businesses, while its Manufacturing Centre of Excellence builds skills in mechatronics, EV systems and Industry 4.0 technologies. "The aftermarket is not a footnote in South Africa's automotive story, it is a chapter in its own right," said Fiets.

"When we invest in township workshops and advanced technical training, we are building an economy that works for everyone."

## CONNECTING INDUSTRY

"What we heard today was a clear recognition of where the opportunities lie and a determination to act on them," said Michael Dehn, MD of Messe Frankfurt South Africa. "KwaZulu-Natal has the exports, the confidence, and the infrastructure to lead. Automechanika Johannesburg exists to give industry leaders the platform, the data, and the connections to turn that potential into results."

The next CEO Breakfast takes place on 7 May 2026 in Gqeberha. Automechanika Johannesburg 2026 opens at Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand, from 27 to 29 October 2026.

# Infrastructure SA secures \$1bn UPL bio-ethanol investment pledge

**M**INISTER of Public Works and Infrastructure Dean Macpherson welcomed Infrastructure South Africa's contribution to the successful hosting of the South African Investment Conference in Sandton last month, in particular its role in helping to unlock a \$1 billion investment pledge by global agricultural company UPL announced at the conference.

The investment amounts to approximately R17 billion. It is being led by UPL Chairman and Group CEO Jai Shroff and is linked to a large-scale bioethanol production facility in South Africa.

The project will utilise sugarcane and maize

as a feedstock and support the development of an integrated agricultural and energy value chain.

Infrastructure South Africa, an entity of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, played a key facilitative role in advancing the project by bringing together stakeholders across the agricultural, energy and financial sectors. This included supporting engagements between UPL and a major development finance institution to explore project preparation and financing opportunities as well as broader collaboration to move the project towards implementation.

The project has the potential to cultivate

approximately 400,000 hectares of sweet sorghum and the production of up to 1.3 billion litres of bioethanol annually. The project intends to inject significant amounts of money directly back to small and large scale farmers. This positions South Africa as a potential leader in the biofuels sector, while supporting rural development and job creation.

Minister Macpherson said Infrastructure South Africa is playing an increasingly important role in unlocking investment by removing bottlenecks, coordinating stakeholders and supporting project preparation. "When I was appointed Public Works and Infrastructure minister 21 months ago, I committed to turn-

ing the department into the economic delivery unit of South Africa to help grow the economy and create much-needed jobs. The \$1 billion investment, facilitated by Infrastructure South Africa, is clear evidence of the progress we are making in achieving that goal," he said.

"This investment demonstrates what is possible when government plays an active role in facilitating partnerships, removing obstacles and aligning stakeholders behind a common objective. It highlights the growing importance of Infrastructure South Africa in ensuring that projects of this scale move from concept to implementation as we work to build a better South Africa."

# Polymer price volatility hits supply, says Plastics SA

**T**HE global polymer market is experiencing severe disruption as geopolitical tensions in the Middle East ripple through energy markets, trade routes, and supply chains. Since polymers are derived from petroleum-based products such as natural gas and naphtha, instability in upstream markets has had an immediate impact on plastics.

Feedstock costs have surged, driving unprecedented volatility in polymer pricing worldwide. Between March and April 2026, reported increases reached 30% and continue to climb. Combined with rising freight costs, landed prices in South Africa have escalated

sharply. Local production, already constrained by ageing infrastructure and operational challenges, now faces further pressure from limited feedstock availability.

Global supply constraints compound the problem. Production slowdowns in Southeast Asia, where manufacturers depend heavily on Middle Eastern feedstocks, have intensified shortages. "The pace and scale of these increases are unlike anything the industry has experienced in recent years," says Anton Hanekom, executive director of Plastics



SA. "This is not simply a pricing cycle, but a convergence of global risks placing sustained pressure across the plastics value chain."

The environment has created heightened uncertainty. Traders face fluctuating prices with limited guarantees from suppliers, while converters hesitate to commit to forward orders. Increased purchasing activity, often exceeding normal demand, is straining supply further.

Plastics SA highlights opportunities for resilience through recycling. South Africa's

established recycling sector offers alternative sources of material, with recycled polymers such as PE-HD, PE-LD and PET supplementing supply. "We encourage manufacturers to explore recycled materials where feasible. This supports continuity and advances sustainability objectives," Hanekom explains.

Looking ahead, volatility is expected to persist. Supply constraints may tighten further as global trade flows remain disrupted. Rising fuel, gas, fertiliser, and logistics costs underscore the systemic nature of the disruption. Plastics SA remains committed to supporting the industry with insights, sustainable practices, and advocacy for resilience.



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# Government backs Gledhow Mill revitalisation

TRADE, Industry and Competition (dtic) Deputy Minister Zuko Godlimpi visited sugar mills in KwaZulu-Natal ahead of the reopening of the Sugarcane Crushing Season in May, as government moves to support the recovery and sustainability of South Africa's sugar industry.

Godlimpi toured facilities including Gledhow Mill, where operations are being revitalised under new ownership following a major investment commitment.

Speaking to the media during the visit, Godlimpi said workers at Gledhow Mill had been reassured that the government is prioritising job preservation while also ensuring

the company operates sustainably.

"The government is dedicated to supporting the company's transition to renewable energy resources," he said.

Gledhow Mill includes a back-end refinery and is currently undergoing a major off-crop maintenance programme.

The work forms part of the new mill owner's three-year capital investment plan aimed at upgrading infrastructure, improving operational efficiency and modernising production processes.

According to Godlimpi, the new investor is introducing advanced technology at the plant to improve



efficiency and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

The upgrades are also expected to support the manufacturing of

spare parts for use at other factories in the surrounding area, contributing to local industrial activity and the regional economy.

"The parts to be sold to these factories in the area will contribute to the local economy," Godlimpi said.

The reopening of Gledhow Mill follows a reported R1.8 billion expansion project by the new owners, as committed through the South African Investment Conference in March 2026.

South Africa's sugar industry remains a strategic agro-processing value chain that supports rural livelihoods, small-scale growers and regional economies, particularly in

KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

However, the sector continues to face structural challenges, including the risk of potential mill closures that could significantly affect cane growers, rural employment and linked value chains.

The dtic and government development finance institutions such as the Industrial Development Corporation remain committed to supporting the reopening of sugar cane mills to preserve jobs and sustain rural livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal.

The department said this commitment reflects the government's recognition that livelihoods would be negatively affected by any disruption to sugar industry operations.

# Agriculture MEC backs ear tagging to fix livestock sector crisis

THE MEC for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal has hailed the ear tagging of cloven-hoofed animals as a game changer, saying the technological advancements and measures implemented by officials will address the triple challenges in the sector. Veterinary-led teams are vaccinating cattle and fitting them with distinctive tags showing the vaccinated status of the animals, thereby addressing corridor diseases and livestock theft.

MEC Thembeni kaMadlo-

pha-Mthethwa visited the Mpempe Diptank at Mngobokazi in Hluhluwe, where she saw 1400 cattle vaccinated. In one day, the areas within the Inkosi Mtubatuba and Big 5 Hlabida local municipalities witnessed a total of 14 412 animals inoculated and eartagged.

The MEC joined 20 vaccination teams on a drive in areas under the Big 5 Hlabisa and Inkosi Mtubatuba local municipalities. The areas under these local municipalities have a target of 55000 cattle to be vaccinated. The vaccination efforts have been concluded in uMhlaby-



alingana, Jozini, and two districts - uGu and Harry Gwala.

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa visited

the Mpempe Diptank to assess the progress made since the programme started last week. During her visit, she spoke with local livestock farmers about the challenges affecting them and how to resolve any outstanding issues they were encountering.

Addressing the farmers, she stressed that the ear tagging would effectively address stock theft and corridor diseases in the Mngobokazi area in Hluhluwe which has battled with these issues because of its proximity to wildlife reserves.

She commended the Livestock Identification and Traceability System (LITS), saying that the system effectively addresses the challenges currently faced by the sector. "The ear tagging system helps with identification of cattle ownership, district of origin, and, in areas closer to game reserves, helps deal with opportunistic corridor diseases and addresses the issue of stock theft in the district. Animals in close proximity to game reserves are branded with green tags, while others are marked with yellow tags," said kaMadlopha-Mthethwa.

# Smart farming drives efficient food production

BMG's Smart-Farming agricultural team works closely with farmers throughout southern Africa, assisting them with the selection, installation and operation of new electromechanical systems. These projects are designed to improve efficiencies, reduce energy consumption and minimise maintenance requirements.

"Like all sectors of business, farming operations are facing the challenges of power supply limitations and the rising costs of electricity and water consumption, as well as crippling labour, capital equipment investment and maintenance expenses," says Carlo Beukes, BMG's agricultural manager. "BMG's team of agricultural experts - through its 'Boer Slim' Smart Farming initiative - continues to offer local farmers sustainability solutions that focus on effective food production.

"As part of our Smart-Farming initiative, we are assisting farmers with cost-efficient solutions to improve crop production output, to enhance efficiencies of every operation by conserving power consumption and

to minimise downtime by implementing practical maintenance programmes."

In a recent project, the BMG team assisted a local farmer who wanted to accelerate his tobacco drying process and expand crop production, but was restricted by power supply limitations. After the installation of BMG electronic variable speed drives (VSDs), the farmer was able to run 22 tobacco drying containers at once, where previously he could only run and alternate between nine drying containers at any one time. As a result, he has more than doubled his crop production output.

Other positive feedback from the local farmer is that there are no more noticeable voltage dips when the process is started up, and wear and tear on mechanical components is reduced. Production is also now less labour intensive, which reduces his shift costs.

BMG has also assisted a farmer in the Barkly West area, who was limited by a power supply of only 200 KVA +/- 300 Amps, to significantly reduce the cost of irrigation per hectare.

After the installation of VSDs on all pump sets, the power supply is used more efficiently, resulting in improved crop production and expansion of the farmer's supply of maize, to now also include pecan nuts.

Danfoss VLT AQUA Drive FC 202 VSDs - which offer additional energy savings compared with traditional VSD controls - have been designed for water and wastewater applications, including irrigation. These VSDs have been fitted to all pumps in this installation and are controlled by pressure transducers that are set to match the varying demands of different irrigation requirements. The only peripheral component required was a pressure transducer. Pump controllers and valves were not necessary for flow control in this system.

A notable feature of Danfoss AQUA Drive FC 202 VSDs includes a soft start/stop facility, which prevents water hammer on starting and stopping the pumps, thus reducing the possibility of burst pipes. Wear and tear on couplings, pumps and pipes is also reduced.

These VSDs are available from

BMG in IP55 enclosures, which do not require dedicated panels. This eliminates the need for additional cooling and ventilation, normally required to extract heat during operation.

To ensure absolute dependability and the highest performance of these systems, BMG was responsible for the installation and commissioning of these projects. Added to this, farmers have the assurance of support from BMG, which is an authorised DrivePro® service partner of Danfoss.

With a projected annual power saving of 155 491 kW/hr, BMG expects the farmer to benefit from cost savings of approximately R108 444, with a payback time of less than 12 months.

The BMG team is also committed to preventing unnecessary breakdowns, which is why reliability is the main focus when designing the drive systems for new and upgraded facilities.

All BMG components are precisely matched to each other and to application requirements, to ensure high productivity, smooth operation



and long service-life.

The company's broad branch network offers original spares and advanced workshop resources that ensure all repairs to agricultural components meet pristine OEM standards.

BMG provides solutions to all key players in the agricultural sector, including local manufacturers of equipment and implements, as well as agricultural re-sellers and farmers.



# From manual to smart welding: Automation reshapes SA's fabrication sector

FOR decades, welding across South Africa's manufacturing sector has relied heavily on manual processes, skilled, adaptable and deeply embedded in fabrication environments from manufacturing businesses to large industrial plants. But a quiet shift is underway. Welding automation, once largely confined to high-volume automotive production, is becoming increasingly accessible to a broader range of manufacturers.

This shift is not simply about technology adoption. It reflects deeper structural pressures facing local industry: persistent skills shortages, rising input costs, global competition and growing expectations around quality and traceability. As a result, robotic and laser welding solutions are moving from a "nice-to-have" efficiency upgrade to a strategic competitiveness tool.

Many organisations are seeing this transition first-hand as manufacturers explore automation pathways that are scalable, flexible and financially viable, even for mid-sized operations.

## AUTOMATION MOVES BEYOND AUTOMOTIVE

Historically, robotic welding in South Africa has been strongly associated with automotive manufacturing, where high volumes and repeatability justified significant capital investment. Outside of this environment, adoption was slower, often constrained by cost, complexity, and perceptions that robotics were only suitable for large production runs.

That dynamic is changing.

Advances in integrated welding cells, particularly those combining robotics with modern power sources and laser technology, are lowering the barrier to entry. These systems allow manufacturers to program, monitor and control welding parameters directly through the robot platform, improving consistency while reducing setup variability.

Newer solutions are designed with flexibility in mind. Instead of rigid, single-application installations, manufacturers can deploy modular cells that support multiple product types, shorter runs and evolving production needs – realities that define much of South Africa's manufacturing sector.

Andrew Crackett (pictured), Managing Director at Yaskawa Southern Africa, says the conversation with customers has shifted noticeably in recent years. "We are seeing growing interest from manufacturers who previously felt robotics were out of reach. The question is no longer whether automation is relevant – it is how to implement it in a way that supports real production challenges".

A key factor behind this shift is affordability, not necessarily that robotic welding is inexpensive, but that its value equation has become clearer.

Manufacturers are increasingly evaluating automation through a total-cost lens: reduced rework, improved throughput, lower scrap rates, better quality consistency



and the ability to meet demanding customer specifications. In sectors where margins are tight and export opportunities depend on quality assurance, these factors are significant.

Accessible robotic and laser welding also helps manufacturers stabilise production in the face of skills constraints. South Africa's shortage of experienced welders remains a well-documented challenge, particularly for precision and repeatable work.

Automation does not eliminate the need for welding expertise, but it changes where that expertise is applied, shifting skilled workers toward programming, oversight, quality control and process optimisation.

"Automation should be seen as an enabler for skilled people, not a replacement," explains Crackett. "It allows manufacturers to use scarce skills more effectively while achieving levels of consistency that are difficult to maintain manually."

## ENABLING SMES TO ENTER AUTOMATION

One of the most significant implications of accessible welding automation is the expanding participation of small and medium-sized manufacturers.

SMEs often operate in high-mix, lower-volume environments – conditions traditionally viewed as unsuitable for robotics. However, flexible robotic welding cells, simplified pro-

gramming tools and faster deployment models are changing that perception.

For these businesses, automation is increasingly linked to growth rather than scale alone. The ability to deliver repeatable quality, shorten lead times, and secure more complex work can open doors to new customers, including large original equipment manufacturer (OEM) supply chains.

This is particularly relevant in South Africa's localisation push, where local fabricators are expected to meet global quality benchmarks while remaining cost-competitive.

"Many mid-sized manufacturers are looking at automation as a way to unlock new opportunities rather than simply reduce labour costs," says Crackett. "It can change the type of work they are able to take on."

Laser welding is emerging as an important part of this evolution. When integrated with robotics, it offers advantages in speed, precision and reduced heat input, particularly for thin materials and applications requiring high-quality finishes.

While laser welding was previously viewed as highly specialised, integrated robotic laser cells are making the technology more practical for general manufacturing environments. This is especially relevant for sectors such as electrical enclosures, appliances, rail components and sheet-metal fabrication.

The combination of robotic control and advanced welding processes enables manufacturers to standardise output while maintaining flex-

ibility, a critical balance in a market defined by variability.

The move from manual to smart welding reflects a broader digital transition within manufacturing. Welding, often considered a traditional process, is becoming increasingly data-driven, programmable and measurable.

For South African manufacturers navigating cost pressures and global competition, this evolution carries strategic importance. Consistent welding quality affects product reliability, compliance, reputation and export readiness, all central to industrial growth.

Accessible automation, therefore, sits at the intersection of productivity, skills development and industrial modernisation.

"Welding is a foundational process in manufacturing," adds Crackett. "When manufacturers improve welding consistency and efficiency, the impact is felt across the entire production environment."

## LOOKING AHEAD

As technology continues to mature, the distinction between manual and automated welding will become less binary. Hybrid environments, where skilled welders work alongside robotic systems, are likely to define the next phase of adoption.

What is clear is that automation is no longer limited to large, high-volume plants. The tools are becoming more adaptable, more scalable and more aligned with the realities of South Africa's manufacturing landscape.

# Motion guidance systems ensure hygienic, long-life automation in food processing

ENGINEERING company BMG is targeting the high-stakes food protein sector with a suite of specialised linear motion systems from Rollon, designed to bridge the gap between high-performance automation and the industry's hygiene requirements.

As meat, poultry, and fish processing lines face increasing regulatory pressure, the durability of automation components has become a critical factor in operational continuity. BMG's latest rollout focuses on mitigating the risks of mechanical failure and product contamination in environments where caustic wash-downs and corrosive organic matter are the norm.

"Meat, poultry and fish processing lines place unique stresses on automation components, which is why selection of the correct equipment is so critical," says Leon Koekemoer, BMG's Linearway & Ball Screw Product Specialist.

"Rollon motion guidance systems have been developed in line

with stringent industry regulations for global hygiene standards and offer advantages over conventional guides and actuators.."

According to Koekemoer, the Rollon systems are developed specifically to meet stringent global hygiene standards, utilising advanced sealing technology, corrosion-resistant materials, and FDA-compatible lubricants to ensure food-safety compliance.

For compact machinery where space is at a premium – such as slicing, deboning and robotic picking systems – BMG is deploying the Rollon MiniRoller Rail.

The system features:

- Durability: Induction-hardened raceways (58–62 HRC) and nickel-plated rails to withstand mechanical shock and chemical attack.
- Material Integrity: Stainless steel slider bodies and rollers that resist rust.
- Performance: Support for loads up to 720 N per roller, travel



speeds of 1.5 m/s, and acceleration rates of 50 m/s<sup>2</sup>.

- Adaptability: Misalignment tolerance that allows for installation on imperfect mounting surfaces, ensuring smooth, quiet travel with minimal backlash.

For larger linear applications, the Rollon ELM series offers a sealed belt-drive solution designed for aggressive "wet" zones. The unit's internal recirculating ball guides are housed in an extruded aluminium

profile and protected by a polyurethane sealing strip.

To prevent the ingress of high-pressure washdowns or airborne contaminants, the units can be positively or negatively pressurised (0.7–0.8 bar). For environments rich in brine or blood – common in poultry evisceration and fish gutting – BMG offers an anti-corrosion version featuring all-stainless-steel internal components. The ELM supports stroke lengths up to 6 m

and loads up to 2,000 N, reaching speeds of 5 m/s.

BMG is positioning itself as more than a component supplier, offering full engineering support that includes CAD configuration, integration assistance and lifecycle optimisation..

BMG's Rollon portfolio includes linear guides, telescopic rails, actuators and multi-axis systems, as well as ball screws and rotational units - engineered to function reliably in heavy-duty industrial operations. These robust components withstand high loads, continuous use and exposure to harsh environments, making them suitable for other sectors including automotive assembly, electronics manufacturing, packaging and materials handling.

By eliminating exposed mechanical components and enabling rapid cleaning cycles, BMG aims to significantly reduce industry downtime and maintenance overheads in the most demanding industrial environments.



# Next-gen charging solution for tough mining and heavy-duty demands launched

**E**PIROC has launched a new generation of charging solutions specifically made for the challenges of underground mining and heavy-duty electrification.

Improved charging solutions play an important role in reducing the industry's reliance on fossil fuels and mitigating the risks of supply disruption and price instability.

With the ability to place remote charge posts up to 300 metres from the central cabinet, mines gain significantly more freedom in employing decentralised charging strate-

gies to reduce tramping, minimise queues and keep power close to active faces.

Trent Sears, Global Product Manager – EV Infrastructure at Epiroc, explains: "Our new charging solution is the result of years of experience from the field, delivering reliable power where it's needed and giving customers the operational flexibility to get the most from their electrified vehicles - regardless of the manufacture."

The new chargers are



designed to withstand dust, humid-

ity and continuous heavy-duty use.

They are engineered for the toughest underground conditions and protected by an IP65-classified design.

Charge posts can be pedestal-mounted or wall-mounted, giving operations the possibility to place them where they're most effective.

"To further boost productivity, the chargers support dynamic power sharing across up to eight posts per cabinet.

This allows available capacity to be directed to where it's needed, adapting in real time to changing fleet patterns and helping maintain high equipment utilisation throughout every shift," says Sears.

Other benefits include telematics support for tracking charge sessions, plug-and-play power electronics that simplify serviceability, installation and configuration. They create a unified "one charging solution" for mixed battery-electric fleets.

The new charging solutions are available globally as of this month.

# New boiler hoist for confined operations

**M**AINTENANCE operations in high-value industrial environments are often constrained by space. Facilities such as silos, blast furnaces, co-generation plants and boilers frequently restrict access to openings as small as 45cm, rendering conventional lifting equipment ineffective and forcing teams to rely on labour-intensive manual handling.

According to SkyJacks Managing Director Darryn Jacobs, many industrial environments were not designed with modern maintenance equipment in mind. The new system, he notes, enables contractors to introduce lifting capabilities into previously hard-to-reach areas without compromising safety or performance.

This operational challenge has prompted SkyJacks to introduce the GEDA 300 Z Boiler Hoist, a compact lifting system engineered specifically for confined environments.

Across sectors including energy,



## DESIGNED FOR CONFINED INDUSTRIAL SPACES

The GEDA 300 Z addresses these constraints through a modular design that enables all components to pass through narrow access points, including standard manholes. Once inside, the system can be assembled by two workers in about 40 minutes, creating a functional hoisting solution in spaces traditionally inaccessible to mechanical lifting equipment.

mining and manufacturing, maintenance work is typically carried out within vertical structures where tools, materials and components must be transported between multiple levels. In the absence of efficient lifting systems, these processes can delay maintenance shutdowns, increasing downtime and placing additional physical strain on workers. The result is reduced productivity, elevated safety risks and mounting pressure to meet tight project timelines.

Beyond accessibility, the hoist is positioned as a productivity tool. By enabling a continuous and controlled flow of materials between working levels, it reduces reliance on manual transport and eliminates common workflow bottlenecks. This improves coordination among teams and allows maintenance activities to progress more efficiently.

With a lifting capacity of up to

300kg and a reach of 100 metres, the system is suited to a range of maintenance and refurbishment applications. Its robust construction is designed to withstand harsh industrial conditions, while its compact footprint allows it to operate where larger systems cannot.

The system reduces the need for manual lifting, helping to lower worker fatigue and the risk of injury. This aligns with broader industry trends that prioritise workforce wellbeing alongside productivity improvements.

Safety features are central to the product's value proposition. The hoist includes overload protection, an electromagnetic braking system, rack-and-pinion drive stability, limit switches, emergency stop controls and a secure load platform. These

measures are intended to safeguard both personnel and materials while supporting compliance with industry safety standards.

Industries expected to benefit most from the solution include power generation, mining, manufacturing, petrochemical operations and industrial construction—sectors where confined-space maintenance is routine and downtime carries significant financial implications.

SkyJacks has also emphasised lifecycle support as part of its offering, providing servicing, compliance inspections, technical assistance, spare parts and operator training. This after-sales infrastructure is aimed at ensuring consistent performance and maximising return on investment.

# Pilot Crushtec targets European growth with Stage V Twister Trac

**E**XHIBITING this year at Hillhead – the UK's largest quarrying, construction and recycling equipment exhibition – Pilot Crushtec will showcase its latest generation TwisterTrac VS350E Stage V mobile crusher while accelerating its drive to build a stronger European distribution footprint.

Taking place from 23 to 25 June 2026, Hillhead is set to attract around 20,000 visitors and more than 600 exhibitors. For Pilot Crushtec, the event marks a significant step in its international growth strategy, according to Sales and Marketing Director Francois Marais.

"We want to make a big statement about our latest model TwisterTrac VS350E which complies with the



European Union's Stage V emissions regulations," Marais says. "We are actively looking to engage with potential distributors for the TwisterTrac and our broader product range – mobile and static."

Hillhead visitors will have the opportunity to inspect a new TwisterTrac VS350E Stage V unit which will be the highlight of Pilot Crushtec's stand at M3 in the show's well known "crusher alley". The expo draws visitors from across Europe.

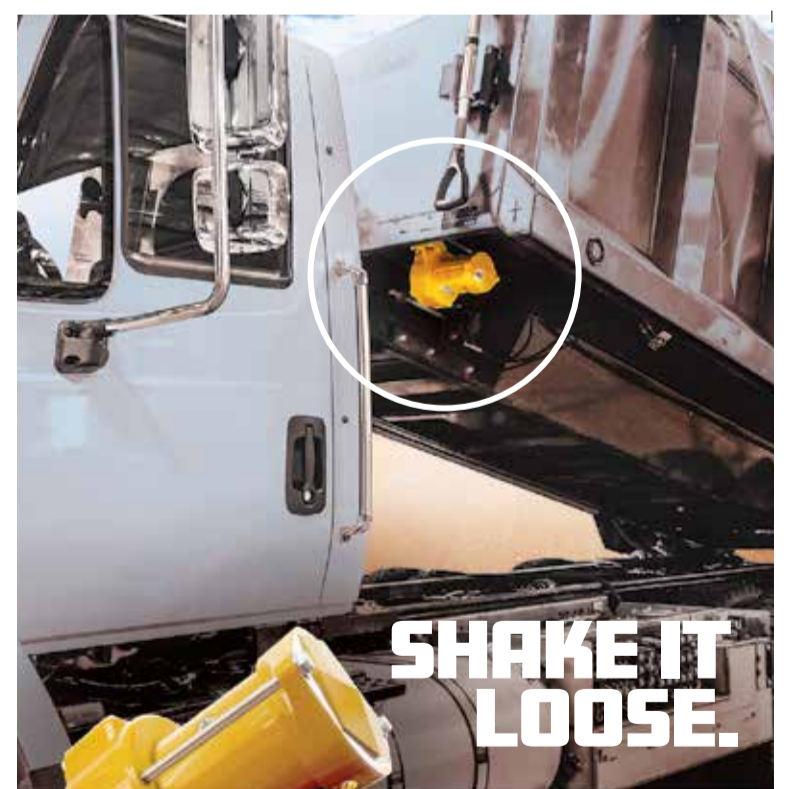
Marais says the decision to exhibit

was driven by the company's growing installed base in Europe and the United Kingdom.

"The very first Stage V TwisterTrac we sold last year went into the UK, where we have supplied a number of previous models," Marais explains.

"We have also supplied machines into eastern Europe, so there is an established machine population. This adds to the confidence of customers and potential distributors."

James Atkins, Product Specialist at Pilot Crushtec, points out that the TwisterTrac VS350E has proven itself as a robust and productive platform. More than 100 units have been supplied globally, with the majority operating outside South Africa.



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# Next-gen conveyor dust control innovations launched

THE global leader in belt conveyor technology, Martin Engineering, has introduced the next generation of safe and effective transfer point dust control equipment.

After rigorous testing across many applications, the Martin ApronSeal urethane skirting, GravitySeal self-adjusting urethane skirting and the A.I.R. Control dust curtain outperformed similar products in tackling fugitive dust and spillage. Retrofitted onto existing transfer points, the system uses no energy to control airborne dust. With safety features for fast external servicing, the designs deliver greater performance at a lower operating cost.

"When designing these, our focus was safety, performance and longevity," said Bert Erdmann, global engineering manager of Conveyor Products at Martin Engineering. "Compliance and ease of maintenance are top-of-mind for our customers. We've discovered that passive dust and spillage control at the

point of emission with safe maintenance built in is the most effective and economical method of containment."

## APRONSEAL URETHANE SKIRTING

Extending along the length of the skirtboard, this skirting's unique design provides multiple "pieces" of reliable containment for material fines. A primary strip is shaped to match the trough angle, creating a tight seal. The optional self-adjusting secondary outer flap covers slight variations in the belt's profile, trapping air and dust.

The ApronSeal urethane skirting requires only 50mm of free belt area. The self-adjusting secondary seal can be easily trimmed to match the available free belt area. Supplied in 1524mm strips, it features convenient T slot end connections for longer chutes. It is designed for external maintenance, improving safety and minimising service time.

Made for belt speeds up to 900 fpm (4.5 m/s), the 90 durometer urethane is chemical-resistant and low-abrasion. It is also available in a high temperature option. With less friction than standard skirting, the ApronSeal offers a longer wear life.

## GRAVITYSEAL SELF-ADJUSTING URETHANE SKIRTING

Using torsion arms that allow the low-friction urethane skirting to smoothly ride the vertical fluctuations in the belt, GravitySeal delivers a reliable skirtboard seal that prevents spillage and reduces dust emissions. The automatic corrections eliminate the need for downtime to adjust the skirting level due to wear.

Featuring a seal and clamp assembly, GravitySeal is designed for conveyor speeds up to 1300 fpm (6.5 m/s) with minimal free edge



space, providing an effective seal with as little as 32 mm of free area on each side of the belt.

The unit's urethane sealing strip is available in continuous lengths up to 91.4m and provides 51mm of wear life. Replacement involves quickly and easily removing the linchpins and installing the new pre-punched strip.

## A.I.R. CONTROL DUST CURTAIN

Engineered for enclosed conveyor transfer points, these dust control solutions are modular urethane curtains with handles that allow a single worker to safely adjust or replace them from outside the enclosure. The safety features eliminate the need for confined space entry and reduce service time to a few minutes.

Each unit is a slide-in cartridge with individual urethane flaps that can

be machine-cut to match the load's angle of surcharge. Positioning the curtains close to the material load allows the A.I.R. Control dust curtain to create controlled recirculation zones. This allows dust particles to settle out, enhancing overall transfer point performance, significantly reducing nuisance dust emissions compared to conventional slit rubber curtains.

When installed on an existing transfer point, ApronSeal urethane skirting, GravitySeal Self-adjusting urethane skirting and A.I.R. control dust curtains provide a highly effective passive dust control solution. They enhance compliance with air quality and workplace safety regulations without relying on expensive, high-maintenance, power-consuming dust capture systems like HVAC filtration or air cleaners.

"We've found urethane to be a versatile and lasting material that can withstand the rigorous demands of the bulk handling industry," Erdmann says.

# Inaugural blast marks the start of a new era at Tharisa

THARISA Minerals officially commenced the next phase of its mining journey with the inaugural blast at its underground project on Tuesday, 31 March 2026, marking the start of a significant transition from open pit to underground mining at its world-class chrome and platinum group metals (PGM) operation in South Africa's Bushveld Complex.

The milestone signals the beginning of a strategic underground development programme that will extend the life of the mine well beyond the expected depletion of open pit resources in 2034. The new bord and pillar operation on the tabular reef is designed to sustain production at 5,6 Mtpa (with headroom to

6,2 Mtpa) and secure the long-term future of one of the country's key mining assets.

Cementation Africa has been appointed as the key development partner for the underground project and will, over the next five years, be responsible for the early works, the main development programme as well as the production ramp-up to around 255 kt per month.

Japie du Plessis, Managing Director of Cementation Africa, says the inaugural blast represents a significant moment for both the client and the broader mining sector.

"The inaugural blast marks the start of an important new era for Tharisa and is a major milestone in extending the life of this world-class

mining operation," Du Plessis says. "We are proud to have been selected as the development partner for this project and to play a leading role in supporting Tharisa's transition to underground mining."

The appointment followed a period of technical and commercial engagement between the two companies.

"This is a strategically important project for the South African mining sector," he says. "The collaboration with Tharisa to date has been highly professional and forward-looking, which is essential for a project of this scale and complexity."

The early works phase at the Apollo portal complex includes the development of three portals with a total advance of about 140 metres.

These works include critical ground support measures, arch-set installations and shotcrete application to ensure long-term stability and safe access to the underground workings.

Following the completion of this phase, the project will move into a five-year main development and stoping contract, paving the way towards steady-state underground production.

Cementation Africa's role extends beyond mine development and excavation to include the establishment of the systems, governance structures and safety frameworks required for underground operations.

"Successful underground mining depends on much more than physical development," says Du Plessis. "It

requires robust governance, comprehensive safety systems and the right operational procedures to support long-term production."

As one of the continent's leading underground mining contractors, Cementation Africa brings extensive experience in underground mine development, raiseboring and shaft sinking, and has been instrumental in transitioning large open pit mines to underground operations.

"Our ability to take mines from early development through to steady-state production is a key strength," Du Plessis says. "This institutional knowledge, combined with our technical capability and training infrastructure, is a major value-add for clients undertaking complex transitions.

# Reliable supply a strategic advantage in high-demand environments

IN industries where uptime is critical and operational interruptions come at a significant cost, reliable access to lubricants has become a strategic priority rather than a simple procurement function. From mining operations in remote regions to high-output manufacturing facilities, consistent lubricant supply plays a vital role in maintaining productivity, protecting equipment, and reducing risk.

The Lube Guys, a specialist supplier of lubricants and petroleum solutions, is positioning reliability at the centre of its value proposition, ensuring customers receive the right products, in full and on time, regardless of location or complexity.

"Reliable supply is not just about delivering product. It is about keep-

ing our customers' operations running efficiently," says Director Nico Bezuidenhout (pictured) "In sectors like mining and heavy industry, even a short delay in lubricant delivery can bring production to a halt. Our focus is on eliminating that risk through dependable, responsive service."

Lubricants are fundamental to the performance and longevity of machinery, reducing friction, managing heat, and preventing wear across critical components. Without consistent access to the correct products, equipment performance can deteriorate rapidly, increasing the likelihood of breakdowns and unplanned downtime.

Supply disruptions, whether driven by global market volatility, logistical challenges, or product shortages,



can have cascading effects across operations. Extended lead times or unavailable stock can force operators into reactive decision-making, often at the expense of efficiency and cost control.

"Supply constraints and pricing pressures have made it more important than ever to work with partners who can secure product availability," explains Bezuidenhout. "It is not only

about cost but ensuring continuity and protecting the integrity of equipment."

In high-demand environments, the consequences of delayed or inconsistent supply are immediate and measurable. Production stoppages, missed targets, and increased maintenance costs are common outcomes when lubricant availability is compromised.

In some cases, operations may resort to using alternative or non-compliant products to bridge supply gaps. While this may offer a short-term solution, it can lead to increased wear, reduced efficiency, and long-term equipment damage.

"A reliable supply partner helps eliminate the need for these compromises," highlights Bezuidenhout.

"By ensuring consistent access to OEM-compliant products, we help customers avoid unnecessary risk and maintain optimal performance."

Building resilience through agile supply models

The company's approach is underpinned by an agile, multi-brand supply model that prioritises flexibility and responsiveness. By working closely with major lubricant manufacturers and leveraging established distribution networks, the company can source and deliver products efficiently across a wide geographic footprint.

This model allows customers to access a broad range of OEM-approved lubricants without being dependent on a single supplier or product line.



# Software leader boosts synthetic fuels ops



**S**OUTH African industrial software leader Adroit Technologies has reinforced its position as a trusted digitalisation partner to the petrochemical and mining sectors through its longstanding collaboration with Sasol Synfuels. The partnership spans several years and covers multiple Sasol entities, including coal mines in the Secunda region and operations in Sasolburg, with Adroit Technologies providing the central monitoring and control backbone for environmental and safety critical processes.

At the heart of this collaboration is one of the largest Adroit SCADA (supervisory, control and data acquisition) environments ever deployed, used for both fire and gas detection across the entire Synfuels plant. The system monitors hundreds of fire panels, gas detectors and alarms in real-time, enabling the central fire station to respond immediately to any risk event within 136 operational units at the site.

National Sales Manager Bradley Campbell explains that Adroit Technologies is known for the flexibility of its SCADA platform, which supports rapid connectivity to diverse devices and industrial technologies. According to Campbell, this adaptability is particularly important in sectors that operate numerous siloed systems.

## UNIFYING ALL OPERATIONAL PROCESSES ACROSS A PLANT

“Adroit Technologies is ideally suited to unifying all operational processes across a plant, providing a single, coherent layer of visibility and control,” he says. Production, Building Management Systems (BMS) and environmental systems can all be unified into a single operational environment, simplifying support, reducing training requirements and ensuring that all decision-critical data lives in one place.

In large-scale operations, it is common for multiple independent systems to support different processes across the plant. The key challenge is enabling these systems to operate as a

cohesive whole without disrupting existing workflows. Adroit Technologies’ architecture is designed specifically to address this, allowing organisations to either progressively modernise or retain existing systems, while centralising visibility and control.

## A SINGLE, INTUITIVE OPERATIONAL VIEW, REDUCING COMPLEXITY FOR OPERATORS

Using native communication protocols or custom integrations where required, the SmartUI Portal delivers a single, intuitive operational view, reducing complexity for operators, improving response times and ensuring that critical information is always accessible for faster, more informed decision-making.

“Clients require technology partners that stay involved throughout implementation and support. With Sasol, we were there every step of the way, from engineering to commissioning, to ensuring round the clock uptime through a service level agreement. It is a relationship built on trust and ongoing innovation,” says Campbell.

## MODULAR ARCHITECTURE SUPPORTING VERTICAL SOLUTIONS

Adroit SCADA objects provide a modular approach to modelling individual process functions or entire process areas. These object libraries can be used directly in core SCADA deployments. They also form the foundation for Adroit Technologies’ vertical solutions, including BMS, energy management, fire detection and Environmental Management Systems. This approach enables faster deployment, consistency across applications and easier long-term maintenance.

James Adams, Key Account Manager at Adroit Technologies, says real-time data visibility is becoming the foundation on which future digital transformation is built. “We are preparing for the wider use of artificial intelligence and advanced analytics in areas such as predictive maintenance. By getting the data architecture right we are unlocking long term value for customers

who want to shift from reactive decisions to proactive insights,” he says.

Adroit Technologies anticipates that demand for integrated digital control solutions in the mining and petrochemical sectors will continue to rise, particularly as industry embraces cloud connectivity, IoT technologies, OPC UA, and unified namespace strategies. The company’s position as a South African engineering success story, with the ability to develop new drivers, communications and features in house, sets it apart in a market that often relies on

imported solutions.

## USING TECHNOLOGY TO DERISK MAJOR OPERATIONS

The evolving partnership with Sasol stands as a compelling example of how technology suppliers can help de-risk major operations while contributing to continuous product improvement for the wider industry.

“We see Sasol as a long-term strategic partner and are proud of the contribution we have been able to make to

their operational resilience and technology modernisation,” says Adams.

“Their appetite for innovation has resulted in a success story that allows us to demonstrate what digital transformation can look like when it is taken seriously.”

Adams adds: “If your organisation is still managing multiple SCADA systems in isolation or struggling to access meaningful operational data, it is the right time to consolidate and modernise. We would love to demonstrate what a unified approach can achieve.”



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# Boiler upgrade project fast-tracked at major South African refinery

AS South African refineries continue to modernise ageing infrastructure to improve environmental compliance and operational reliability, the ability to execute complex boiler modifications within constrained outage windows has become increasingly important.

Babcock completed a fast-tracked industrial boiler upgrade project at a major South African refinery, supporting the facility's broader programme to enhance plant performance and meet statutory emissions requirements. Despite the complexity created by overlapping project phases and a compressed delivery schedule, the project achieved mechanical completion and commissioning within the revised outage programme.

The project demonstrates Babcock's capability to execute technically complex retrofit work within operating refinery environments while maintaining strong safety performance and schedule certainty.

## REFINERY PERFORMANCE

The upgrade formed part of the operator's ongoing programme to improve plant reliability and environmental compliance through targeted infrastructure improvements.

The project required modification of an existing boiler to enable the full routing and treatment of the flue gas stream, ensuring compliance with statutory emission limits while improving plant utilisation.

According to Puvorn Pillay, Project Manager at Babcock, the project represented a critical intervention to ensure both regulatory compliance and operational continuity within a live refinery environment.

"Execution had to take place where safety, schedule certainty and operational integration were critical, requiring close coordination across engineering, procurement and construction teams," he explains.

Pillay led the project through engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning within this complex operating environment.

## MANAGING COMPLEXITY

The project was executed under a dual-contract structure, with detailed engineering awarded separately from procurement and construction. While commercially necessary, this created a fast-tracked execution environment in which engineering maturity, procurement placement and construction readiness progressed in parallel rather than sequentially.

"As a result, downstream activities were highly sensitive to design development, vendor inputs and approval cycles, introducing integration and delivery risks early in execution," says Pillay.

To address this, the project team focused on stabilising execution across interfaces that were initially misaligned. This required a shift from discipline-based progress measurement towards integrated delivery planning, ensuring engineering outputs were continuously evaluated against procurement and construction readiness rather than measured in isolation.

## ADAPTIVE EXECUTION APPROACH

As engineering progressed, several critical work packages experi-

enced delays due to evolving validation requirements and extended approval processes. Rather than allowing these challenges to impact outage readiness, the project team implemented an adaptive execution approach focused on maintaining delivery momentum.

"Given the aggressive overlap between engineering, procurement and construction phases, we had to adopt an iterative execution approach that allowed solutions to be developed dynamically. Strong integration between engineering, project management and construction teams was central to this," Pillay explains.

Construction sequencing was continuously reassessed, enabling progressive advancement of work fronts as materials became available. Piping, ducting and structural installations were executed in phases, while independent activities were accelerated to maintain productivity.

## COORDINATION CRITICAL

Close coordination between engineering, procurement, construction and subcontract teams played a key role in maintaining delivery certainty. Scenario planning and proactive risk management enabled the project team to maintain progress while preserving safety and quality standards within a congested refinery outage environment.

Stakeholder management also proved important. The evolving scope required disciplined change management while maintaining collaborative relationships with the client and operational teams.

By ensuring transparency in technical decision-making and aligning



discussions with project outcomes, the team was able to manage scope growth without disrupting execution.

"Credit must go to the client for the collaborative approach adopted throughout execution. This was a critical success factor in a fast-tracked project where compressed timelines and parallel workstreams required rapid, joint decision-making," says Pillay.

Despite early schedule pressures and execution complexity, the project achieved mechanical completion within the revised outage programme and progressed successfully through commissioning.

Safety performance remained a key focus throughout construction, with the project achieving:

- Zero Lost Time Injuries
- Full compliance with refinery safety systems
- Successful quality validation of all modifications

The outcome reflects disciplined planning, strong coordination and adaptive execution under challenging delivery conditions.

According to Pillay, one of the key organisational learnings from the

project relates to the importance of focused integration management.

"Projects executed under overlapping EPC structures require strong integration between engineering, procurement and construction planning from the outset," he says.

The project reinforced the importance of aligning contracting strategies with execution realities and maintaining flexibility within delivery teams.

"Beyond the immediate delivery results, this work strengthened our organisational capability in managing fast-tracked delivery environments and reinforced the importance of tightly linking engineering maturity to downstream execution readiness," he says.

The successful delivery of the project highlights Babcock's capability in executing complex boiler modifications and retrofit work within live refinery environments.

The project reflects the company's broader capability in supporting industrial customers through lifecycle asset support, performance upgrades and environmental compliance improvements.

# Sustainability and skills: how TES partnerships enable a cleaner petrochemical industry

By Pierre Bekker, Director, and Jacques Maritz, National Sales & Service Manager at Quyn International Outsourcing

SUSTAINABILITY has moved from being a talking point in the petrochemical industry to a defining business priority. As the shift toward cleaner energy accelerates, companies are rethinking how they operate, from production processes to workforce planning. Environmental responsibility now defines both competitiveness and compliance.

In this context, Temporary Employment Services (TES) providers have become essential partners, supplying skilled, compliance-ready professionals who help companies meet new regulatory and technological requirements while maintaining productivity.

## OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

The move toward sustainable ener-

gy has changed how petrochemical companies plan and operate. Stricter environmental standards, safety requirements and operational controls have made compliance a core part of business performance. Preventing emissions breaches, spills and environmental incidents is now as important as maintaining output.

These changes have transformed the skills companies need. General trade experience alone is no longer enough. Organisations now require qualified personnel who understand how to operate within sustainability-focused frameworks. Technical competence, regulatory awareness and a strong safety culture have become essential.

As environmental regulations tighten and cleaner fuels become the norm, the demand for workers who understand both their trade and the environmental risks associated with it continues to grow.

Modern petrochemical plants rely

on employees who can integrate emissions control, energy efficiency and sustainable plant management into their daily work.

## THE RISE OF SPECIALIST AND CROSS-DISCIPLINARY ROLES

Modern petrochemical facilities are digitised and data-driven. Workers who have not kept pace with automation, energy management and efficiency systems risk falling behind. Sustainability has become an integral part of every job description and continuous learning is now essential for career growth.

A boilermaker or technician without experience in new environmental and automation standards cannot easily move from a small workshop to a large production site.

The pace of change in technology and regulation has widened the gap between traditional experience and the specialised expertise now required.

Skills in carbon capture, emissions monitoring, renewable energy integration and sustainable process design are increasingly in demand. Companies are hiring more health, safety and environmental officers. New roles such as sustainability officers are emerging to connect environmental strategy with daily operations.

## TES PROVIDERS BRIDGING CRITICAL SKILLS GAPS

This shift calls for collaboration across engineering, operations and compliance teams. Employees need to combine technical knowledge with an understanding of environmental impact and regulatory requirements. Continuous upskilling and adaptability have become essential to maintaining high standards of performance.

TES providers play a critical role in managing this workforce transformation.

As industry specialists, they supply trained, certified and compliance-ready professionals who can be deployed quickly to meet operational and environmental standards. With experience across shutdowns, maintenance, and new plant builds, TES partners understand the technical demands of petrochemical operations.

Their ability to provide qualified personnel who can integrate immediately helps companies maintain productivity while meeting evolving regulations. TES providers bring both industry insight and workforce agility, ensuring that talent aligns with a company's technical and sustainability objectives.

TES providers help petrochemical companies turn workforce challenges into opportunities. By supplying skilled, ready-to-work professionals, TES partners enable companies to meet compliance requirements, operate efficiently and adopt new technologies without disruption.



# Supporting FMCG resilience through warehousing and distribution

By Ben Reynecke and Frans Masango

**F**MCG (fast-moving consumer goods) supply chains are being tested like never before.

Current global volatility has led to the closure of some shipping routes, forcing freight to be rerouted due to geopolitical risks and congestion, materially increasing lead times and transport costs.

Warehousing and distribution have become the operational backbone of resilience.

KPMG's 2026 supply chain view notes that the conversation is shifting beyond resilience alone toward "Total Value": combining service, cost, speed, customer experience and performance in a single operating model.

Against this backdrop, Bidvest International Logistics Supply Chain Engineering Lead, Ben Reynecke, explains: "Resilience is engineered long before disruption arises. When warehousing and distribution are designed around real demand, they become the backbone of business continuity.

"For FMCG companies, this

means the ability to absorb shocks and recover quickly without sacrificing service, cost or compliance. In practice, this involves a blend of multi-sourcing, nearshoring, live end-to-end visibility, appropriate buffer stocks and agile fulfilment models that can scale up or down rapidly.

"Real-time visibility platforms give companies insight into shipments and disruptions across modes, allowing them to anticipate problems and reroute shipments before delays cascade into service failures," Reynecke says.

"Resilient networks start with intentional design. Product flows must be mapped against risk exposure, service targets and unit costs before multi-node warehousing is configured. Facilities such as bonded stores, as well as ambient and temperature-controlled environments, must be paired with flexible freight options that support rerouting when corridors are disrupted," he says.

Modern warehousing and distribution facilities position inventory closer to demand, protect product integrity through controlled environments and support complex processes such as

picking, packing and cross-docking. Distribution ensures OTIF (On-Time-In-Full) service delivery while enabling dynamic rerouting when primary corridors slow down.

"Resilience isn't a warehouse or a truck; it's a design choice," adds Frans Masango, Junior Supply Chain Solutions Engineer at BIL.

"In Africa, where infrastructure constraints are significant, decentralised inventory and adaptable distribution networks are especially valuable. The winning model blends local inventory, flexible fleets and live data, enabling rerouting in minutes rather than days. At BIL, we engineer that agility into the network and measure it through OTIF performance. These capabilities reduce lead times, improve responsiveness and mitigate the risk of stockouts when primary logistics corridors face delays," says Masango.

Technology is central to these advances. Warehouse Management Systems (WMS) and Transportation Management Systems (TMS) provide real-time accuracy, dynamic slotting, staff optimisation, dock scheduling and exception manage-



ment. Control tower dashboards offer predictive alerts and scenario planning across transport modes, turning variability into manageable workflows. Visibility platforms provide end-to-end insights, enabling organisations to respond quickly to emerging disruptions, reduce operational friction and improve service performance.

Ultimately, resilience is measura-

ble. Metrics such as OTIF, order and inventory accuracy, dock-to-stock speed and transport ETA reliability have become key indicators of competitive advantage. FMCG brands that treat warehousing and distribution as strategic enablers will be better positioned to maintain shelf availability and drive growth across Africa, even amid ongoing uncertainty.

## CILTSA marks five years of ESG leadership with 2026 conference

**T**HE Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport: South Africa (CILTSA) has opened registration for its 5th Annual CILTSA ESG Conference, to be held on 23 June 2026 in Sandton, Johannesburg.

Themed The ESG Greenprint: Capital | Capability | Commitment, the day-long conference arrives at a time when the cost of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) inaction is rising sharply.

According to a 2024 World Economic Forum white paper, up to 35% of South Africa's export value could be at risk if the country's transport and logistics sectors fail to decarbonise in line with the carbon border policies being adopted by its

leading trade partners.

The conference has established itself as the foremost gathering for sustainability practitioners, executives and policymakers across the logistics, transport and supply chain sectors in South Africa.

This edition raises the stakes further, bringing together green finance specialists, ESG assurance experts, academic institutions and industry heavyweights to deliver a practical, actionable roadmap for businesses of all sizes.

"The ESG Greenprint is not a vision for the future, it is the operating reality of today," says CILTSA President Elvin Harris. "South Africa's logistics, transport and supply chain sectors have the respon-

sibility and the opportunity to lead the necessary transition. CILTSA is committed to ensuring our members and the broader industry have the capital access, skills and strategic resolve to do so," he adds.

### UNLOCKING GREEN FINANCE

A central focus at the conference will be green financing, with a dedicated funding panel bringing together representatives from development finance institutions, commercial banks and green fund managers.

There will be a presentation on ESG assurance frameworks, demonstrating how transport operators can move from a sustainabil-

ity plan to a verified framework that makes their businesses genuinely bankable.

Isuzu Motors South Africa will address the intersection of green fleet investment and the technical skills required to sustain it.

The afternoon session will feature a talent panel focused on closing the ESG skills gap by 2030, moderated by Liesl de Wet, Head of Organisational Sustainability at Unitrans and Chairperson of the Road Freight Association's Green Transport Working Group.

De Wet, who brings deep expertise in SMME sustainability challenges, is forthright about what is at stake. "Doing nothing is no longer the lowest-risk option.

Not responding to ESG requirements can result in supplier exclusion, the inability to secure funding and serious reputational risk."

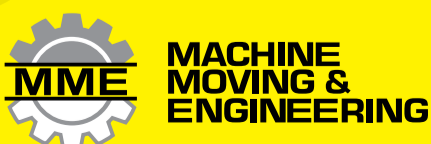
For de Wet, the most important shift is mindset. "In logistics, transport and supply chain, doing ESG well often means running a better business. When ESG considerations are built into everyday decisions - how vehicles are run, how people are treated, how risks are managed - it stops being an extra and starts becoming a genuine business advantage."

Early registration is strongly encouraged.

For more information please visit <https://www.ciltsa.events/5th-ciltsa-esg-conference/>

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# Pharmaceutical distribution centre boosts storage without expanding

A major pharmaceutical distribution operation has significantly increased its usable storage capacity within its existing cold-room warehouse footprint after implementing a high-density storage system designed and supplied by ProMHS.

The facility manages high volumes of pharmaceutical products, including vaccines, oncology treatments and other temperature-controlled medicines, within a multi-client distribution environment. Over time, stock keeping unit (SKU) growth, increasing compliance requirements and rising order volumes placed significant pressure on the available storage space within the fixed building.

The site had already extended its existing very narrow aisle (VNA) racking system to the maximum possible limit. Physical expansion of the cold-room facility would have required significant capital expenditure and operational disruption.

Instead, ProMHS conducted a detailed storage assessment and identified a different underlying issue: underutilised shelf space within the existing racking system. Both shelf depth and vertical height were not being fully utilised, while the operation had increasingly resorted to mixed SKU storage across shelving and half-pallet locations to accommodate growth.

## RETHINKING STORAGE DENSITY

The warehouse had originally



been designed as a VNA operation to maximise pallet storage within the limited cold-room footprint. Order picking was conducted at ground level from four levels of long-span shelving, providing 28 SKU pick faces per rack bay.

Picking activity was spread across the full length of the VNA aisles, requiring coordination between pallet trucks and order pickers operating with trolleys and hand pallet trucks.

The client tasked ProMHS with identifying a solution that could significantly increase storage density while improving picking efficiency. The focus was on small- to medium-sized items with medium to low throughput, commonly classified as B- and C-class inventory.

Several solutions were evaluated, ranging from traditional steel binning systems to automated ver-

tical lift modules. Ultimately, the Storeganizer high-density pocket storage system was selected as the most practical and effective option.

Storeganizer is a vertical textile-based storage system that dramatically increases storage density for small items while maintaining full manual accessibility. The system utilises vertical pocket columns suspended within pallet racking, transforming unused vertical space into organised picking locations.

## MEASURABLE OPERATIONAL IMPACT

The installation delivered substantial improvements in storage density and operational efficiency.

The original shelving configuration provided 28 pick faces per rack bay across an area of 7.07m<sup>2</sup>.

After the installation of Storeganizer:

- Small pocket configuration (300mm × 300mm × 300mm) increased pick faces to 192 per rack bay — a 585% increase in pick-face density, equating to 48.94 pick faces per m<sup>2</sup>.
- Medium pocket configuration (450mm × 300mm × 300mm) increased pick faces to 126 per rack bay — a 350% increase in density, equating to 32.11 pick faces per m<sup>2</sup>.
- Large pocket configuration (450mm × 500mm × 450mm) increased pick faces to 56 per rack bay — a 100% increase in density, equating to 14.27 pick faces per m<sup>2</sup>.

By relocating small-item storage into the high-density pocket system, the operation released around 200 additional pallet storage locations elsewhere in the warehouse.

Picker travel distance was reduced by 42%, as operators now access a higher concentration of SKUs within a much smaller physical footprint.

The combined impact of improved storage density and reduced travel time resulted in a measured 26% increase in picking productivity.

In this phase of the project, the client installed 21 Storeganizer bays. The modular system allows additional bays to be added as operational requirements grow. Because the system uses a universal suspension design compatible with standard pallet racking, it can also be relocated or reconfigured if warehouse layouts change in the future.

Warehouse staff reported improved product visibility, faster item location and a smoother workflow.

“We pick faster because everything is easier to see,” said a warehouse team member. “The pockets are structured and grouped logically. You don’t waste time searching — you grab and move.”

## OPTIMISATION INSTEAD OF EXPANSION

By redesigning how small items were stored within the existing racking system, the project avoided the financial and environmental cost of expanding the refrigerated facility.

The Storeganizer picking zone was positioned at the front of the high-bay pallet storage area, allowing full-pallet movements to occur deeper within the VNA aisles while order picking takes place in a concentrated forward zone.

Because Storeganizer is a manual system that requires no power or automation infrastructure, it delivers increased storage density without additional energy consumption.

“This project demonstrates that space constraints are often density constraints,” said Iain Sherwood, Managing Director of ProMHS. “By analysing how shelf space was actually being used, we identified significant opportunities within the existing footprint. Intelligent storage design can unlock capacity without pouring more concrete or adding more racking.”

## A GROWING INDUSTRY TREND

Across pharmaceutical distribution, third-party logistics (3PL) operations and e-commerce fulfilment centres, warehouse space optimisation is increasingly being viewed as a strategic alternative to facility expansion.

High-density manual storage systems are emerging as a cost-effective way to increase storage capacity and improve productivity while maintaining operational flexibility.

This project highlights a broader shift in the warehousing sector — from expansion-led growth toward optimisation-led performance.

# Responsible bulk logistics requires sensitive operating environments

As a logistics operator working across South Africa’s key corridors, Reinhardt Transport Group (RTG) works within a highly regulated environment where safety, environmental management and compliance are essential. These responsibilities extend beyond regulatory requirements, forming part of the organisation’s broader commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.

RTG recognises that the transportation and handling of bulk commodities require operational excellence as well as an ongoing commitment to responsible practices, particularly in areas where industrial activity takes place alongside established communities.

This is achieved by following established processes and regulatory frameworks that govern the handling, storage and movement of all bulk materials. This might include formal application processes, environmental assessments and public participation to ensure complete oversight for all activities.

RTG outlined the strict procedures followed across its operations.

## 1. Managing operational impact

Bulk material handling requires careful management to minimise environmental impact. In order to remain compliant, RTG implements operational controls that reduce any risks associated with dust, material handling and site activity. RTG is also constantly refining these controls as part of its ongoing commitment to responsible operations. These measures typically include:

- Controlled loading and offloading procedures.
- Ongoing site monitoring and operational oversight.
- Maintenance of equipment and infrastructure to support safe handling.
- Continuous evaluation of opera-



Reinhardt Group Transport (RTG) is an established logistics operator working across South Africa’s key corridors. Image credit: Reinhardt Transport Group

tional practices in line with industry standards.

## 2. Alignment with industry standards

Beyond bulk material handling, the group’s broader operations also follow strict safety, quality and environmental management

standards. Across the business, RTG invests in fleet modernisation, operational efficiency and technologies that support improved environmental performance. This includes initiatives aimed at reducing emissions and optimising transport efficiency.

## 3. Public engagement and transparency

RTG understands the importance of maintaining open and constructive engagement with stakeholders, including neighbouring businesses, communities and regulatory bodies. This includes following formal channels of communication and public participation processes, ensuring that concerns can be raised and addressed appropriately. This approach is guided by transparency, with relevant information

made accessible and a commitment to responsible engagement.

**4. A continuous commitment** Operating in the logistics and bulk transport sector requires constant attention to performance and responsibility. To this end, RTG maintains high operational standards while continuously improving how it manages environmental and community considerations.

RTG recognises that responsible logistics is not a fixed outcome, but an ongoing process that requires vigilance, accountability and a willingness to adapt and improve.

The organisation will continue to actively engage with local stakeholders and ensure operations meet regulatory requirements throughout.

RTG has made application documentation available for public access and review.

For further information regarding current applications and public participation processes, visit:

<https://reinhardt.co.za/public-notice-clairwood/>



# Why South Africa is losing more water than it realises – and what farmers can do about it

By Belinda Boer - Dam Sealing Expert & DAMFIX Application Specialist

**A**CROSS South Africa, the conversation around water is often dominated by drought, failing infrastructure and the looming threat of “Day Zero”. While these are very real concerns, there is a quieter crisis unfolding across farms, smallholdings and rural communities, one that receives far less attention, yet has immediate and practical solutions.

We are losing significant volumes of water not only through broken municipal systems, but through something far closer to home: poorly sealed and inefficient earth dams.

## BENEATH THE SURFACE

Earth dams are the backbone of water storage in much of South Africa’s agricultural sector. From livestock watering to irrigation and game farming, these dams are essential. Yet many of them are underperforming, not because of lack of rainfall, but because of unseen seepage.

Unlike evaporation, which is visible and expected, seepage often goes unnoticed.

A dam may appear stable on the surface while steadily losing water through its base and walls.

Over time, this can result in substantial losses, particularly in areas with sandy or porous soils.

It is not uncommon to find dams losing a meaningful percentage of their stored water without the owner realising the extent of the problem. In a water-scarce country, this is a loss we cannot afford.

## A SHIFT IN THINKING

South Africa’s water challenge is often framed as a supply issue, building more dams, drilling more boreholes or expanding infrastructure.

However, the reality is that increasing supply is expensive, time-consuming and in many cases no longer feasible at scale.

What we need, alongside long-term infrastructure solutions, is a shift in mindset: We must become far more efficient at retaining the water we already have.

For farmers, this begins with asking a simple but critical question: Is the water I have actually staying where it should?

## UNDERSTANDING WHY DAMS FAIL

There are several reasons why earth dams lose water:

- Soil composition: Sandy or rocky soils allow water to pass through easily;
- Poor compaction: Dams that were not properly compacted during construction are more prone to leakage;
- Biological factors: Roots, burrowing animals and organic matter can create pathways for water to escape;
- Age and wear: Over time, even well-built dams can develop cracks and weaknesses.
- These issues are not always visible, which is why they are so often overlooked.

## PRACTICAL STEPS TO TAKE

Improving water retention does not necessarily require large-scale rebuilding. In many cases, practical interventions can significantly improve dam performance.

- Regular inspection: Look for signs such as unexplained drops in water level, persistently wet areas downstream of the dam wall, or changes in soil condition.
- Understand your soil: Knowing whether your dam sits in clay, loam, or sandy soil can help determine its natural ability to retain water.
- Address leaks early: Small seepage issues can quickly develop into major structural and water loss problems if left untreated. Early intervention remains the most

cost-effective approach, but it is equally important to use the right solution for the specific conditions. For example, products like Damfix Wet are designed to penetrate into the soil and seal active leaks by binding soil particles and reducing permeability from within. This makes it particularly effective for addressing existing seepage without the need for extensive reconstruction.

Consider sealing and rehabilitation options: There are several proven methods available to improve dam sealing, depending on the soil type and condition of the structure. These include solutions such as Flexi Linings, Sodium Bentonite, or polymer-clay advanced sealers like Damfix Dry. Each option offers different benefits, from physical barriers to chemical bonding within the soil, and should be selected based on a proper assessment of the dam.

Think long-term: A well-maintained dam is not just a seasonal asset, it is part of a long-term water security strategy for the farm.

While national infrastructure challenges will take time to resolve, farmers and landowners are not without agency.

A well-functioning dam can mean the difference between surviving a dry season and facing significant losses.

# Why local pump stockholding is redefining rapid dewatering response

**F**LOODING events are no longer isolated anomalies; they are recurring disruptions that demand fast, well-coordinated responses. The ability to deploy dewatering solutions rapidly has become central to how mining and infrastructure operations manage risk. In this context, local pump stockholding is no longer a convenience, it is a critical operational advantage.

Integrated Pump Technology has built a strong market position by maintaining substantial local stock of both electrical submersible pumps and diesel-driven units. This allows the company to respond quickly when operations are under pressure from sudden water ingress.

“In a flood or extreme rainfall event, time is the most critical factor,” says Managing Director Jordan Marsh. “Waiting weeks for imported equipment isn’t viable when safety, production and infrastructure are at risk. Local availability allows immediate deployment.”

Beyond speed, local stockholding enables more effective solution design. Pumps can be selected and configured according to actual site conditions, not limited by what is available internationally. Integrated Pump Technology combines its inventory with application-specific expertise, ensuring fit-for-purpose solutions across scenarios such as underground dewatering, open pit flood recovery and temporary infrastructure protection.

Electrical submersible pumps from Grindex are central to this approach. Built for con-

tinuous operation in abrasive environments, they are widely used in underground workings, sumps and confined spaces where reliability and rapid installation are essential. Their local availability allows mines to stabilise conditions quickly and move from emergency response to controlled water management.

Diesel-driven, self-priming pumps from Godwin are equally important, particularly where power supply is limited or compromised. Integrated Pump Technology’s in-house capability to engineer and assemble diesel pump sets locally further strengthens its ability to deliver tailored solutions at short notice, even in remote locations.

Local stockholding also underpins effective aftermarket support. With pumps, spares and technical expertise based in South Africa, the company can support installations, troubleshoot issues and scale capacity as conditions evolve. As weather-related disruptions increase, dewatering is becoming a core operational discipline.

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# From manual monitoring challenges to smart groundwater management

**M**ONITORING groundwater levels across large industrial sites is critical—but for Salzgitter Flachstahl GmbH, it became increasingly difficult to manage.

With an extensive works area and surrounding landfill sites requiring constant observation, groundwater levels were traditionally meas-

ured manually. This process was not only time-consuming and labour-intensive, but also limited in scalability. As the number of required measuring points grew, the existing approach could no longer keep up—creating a clear need for a more efficient, reliable, and future-ready solution.

## A SMARTER, SCALABLE SOLUTION

To address this challenge, Salzgitter Digital Solution GmbH was tasked with developing a fully automated and digital monitoring system using LoRaWAN technology. LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) is a wireless com-



munication protocol designed for long-distance, low-power data transmission, making it ideal for industrial monitoring.

In collaboration with KELLER Pressure, a solution was implemented using high-precision level probes and the ADT1 LoRa transmission unit, which wirelessly sends measurement data over the LoRaWAN network. This setup enabled continuous, wireless groundwater monitoring across multiple sites.

The system delivered:

- Accurate, validated measurement data through high-quality sensors
- Seamless integration into the existing LoRaWAN network
- Real-time visibility of groundwater levels across all monitoring points

Beyond basic measurements, the solution also captures critical diagnostic data, including battery voltage (amount of electrical energy remaining), temperature (internal system heat), humidity (moisture in the air around the system), and signal quality (strength and clarity of data transmission). This information provides early warnings for maintenance and helps ensure long-term reliability.

## BUILT FOR RELIABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

The ADT1 LoRa unit was designed with practicality in mind. Using standard AA batteries with a lifespan of up to five years, the system minimises maintenance requirements while ensuring continuous operation.

Data security was another key consideration. With encrypted LoRa (Long Range) communication, which transmits data wirelessly over long distances, and an integrated data logger (a device that records and stores data), the system ensures that no critical data is lost - even during transmission interruptions.

## PROVEN PERFORMANCE

Since its implementation, the automated groundwater monitoring system has been running reliably for over three years. What was once a labour-intensive and limiting process has been transformed into a smart, scalable, and efficient solution—supporting better decision-making and long-term environmental compliance.

KELLER's equipment manufacturing team develops solutions tailored to its production department's requirements and meets its high standards of quality and precision. This has allowed KELLER to continuously improve its products, process stability and efficiency over the last 50 years.

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# Adhesives giant expands to Durban amidst growing market demand

**P**RATLEY, a leading South African manufacturer and distributor of high-performance adhesives, minerals and electrical termination products, has expanded and relocated its Durban depot to Cornubia.

The larger premises, north of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, has increased stockholding capacity, a raining centre and enhanced security for customers.

Eldon Kruger, Marketing Director at Pratley, says: "The decision to expand and relocate our Durban depot was driven by two key factors. First, our previous premises were in an ageing and deteriorating section in Durban, which posed

security risks for staff and customers. Second, we needed a much larger facility to accommodate increased stock volumes, as our sales continue to grow."

Customers in the region no longer need to rely on stock deliveries from the company's head office in Krugersdorp, Gauteng. "We are now able to maintain higher inventory levels in Durban," says Kruger.

"This means reduced delivery times and a much more responsive service to meet our customers' needs."



Eldon Kruger

The facility can now accommodate interlink trucks, compared to the previous seven-tonne transport capacity. This has streamlined logistics, reduced transport cost and significantly improved delivery efficiency across KwaZulu-Natal and beyond.

Among the products more readily available are Pratley's lightweight mineral products, Pratliperl® and Grolite®, with stock levels of over 1 000 bags per product. The depot carries a broader selection of Pratley Electrical Termination products,

including cable glands and junction boxes, as well as the company's renowned high-strength adhesives and epoxy solutions.

Strategically located in Cornubia near Umhlanga, the new site offers easy access from both Durban and Richards Bay, two key industrial hubs. "This move positions us closer to our customers and strengthens our logistical efficiency," adds Kruger.

Customers can also be trained on the proper use of Pratley's products at the new training centre.

"One of our objectives is to engage the younger generation by showcasing the advantages of using Pratley products in real-world applications, empowering them with the knowl-

edge to use them effectively," says Kruger.

Customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with appreciation for the safer location, improved parking and overall convenience. The Durban expansion follows similar developments in Cape Town, where Pratley has acquired additional depot properties to improve supply chain efficiency and customer support across South Africa.

"We warmly encourage our clients to visit our new depot and take advantage of the training facilities, which are valuable resources designed to strengthen product knowledge and improve customer experience," says Kruger.

# DUT champions green hydrogen innovation through TVET collaboration

**T**HE Department of Chemical Engineering at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), in collaboration with the Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) unit, recently participated in a Green Hydrogen Production engagement at Thekwini TVET College, Melbourne Campus.

The initiative is designed to strengthen skills and advance research within the TVET sector.

Dr Emmanuel Tetteh, Senior Lecturer and Principal Investigator of the Green Engineering Research Group (GERG), delivered insights on Academic and Research Strides

in Hydrogen Production and Technology, highlighting an ongoing green hydrogen funded project supported by the South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) and its contribution to South Africa's sustainable energy transition.

Sharing the significance of the initiative, Dr Tetteh said the engagement aims to strengthen collaborative efforts towards advancing the Green Hydrogen Roadmap, particularly in supporting capacity development at TVET colleges as part of the research drive in KwaZulu-Natal. Sharing knowledge with collabora-

tors helps to foster stronger research capabilities that will address the growing need for skills in hydrogen research.

Dr Tetteh emphasised that once the demonstrator systems become fully operational, DUT intends to open its facilities to students and staff from partnering TVET colleges, creating greater opportunities for practical training and collaboration.

The goal is to provide a real time learning experience beyond theoretical knowledge. Visitors will have the opportunity to observe firsthand how hydrogen energy is produced through sustainable methods, how

it is captured and stored, and how it can be utilised across various applications within the green economy.

Nonhlanhla Ntombela, Sanelisiwe Dietsela, and Nqobile Mkhize, all from the Department of Chemical Engineering, were also part of the visiting team at the Thekwini TVET Green Hydrogen Energy initiative.

Ntombela highlighted the value of such initiatives, noting that they play a crucial role in enhancing research skills, fostering networking opportunities and broadening knowledge through stakeholder engagement. She said that engaging with knowledgeable individuals and diverse

stakeholders broadens one's perspective and encourages researchers to share their work and seek exposure.

Key organisations in attendance included the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority, and the Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority.

This collaboration brought together national and international stakeholders to strengthen research partnerships, share expertise, and advance innovation in the green hydrogen sector.

# Hitachi Energy ramps up African investments to support grid readiness for the AI era

**A**S global demand for artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure accelerates, Hitachi Energy has unveiled a major expansion of its manufacturing, research and development (R&D), and engineering capacity to meet rising needs for transformers, advanced grid technologies and digital solutions. Backed by a multi-year investment exceeding US\$6 billion - the largest in the power-grid sector-the initiative reflects the company's ambition to support a more sustainable and resilient energy future.

The surge in AI data centres is placing unprecedented strain on global supply chains. Market estimates indicate that between 90 and 125 GW of new AI data-centre capacity will be added between 2025 and 2030. This growth could require up to 1,400 power transformers, alongside significant volumes of switchgear, disconnectors, power-electronics systems and battery storage. However, lead times for large transformers already range from two to four years due to limited manufacturing capacity and



raw material shortages.

In response, Hitachi Energy is scaling up production across multiple regions, as outlined in its Gridlocked? AI's Energy Appetite position paper. The company is investing in facilities to boost output of high-voltage transformers, gas-insulated switchgear, advanced power electronics and digital automation systems. At the same time, it is expanding its global R&D footprint, focusing on digital grid management, power-system stability and next-generation transformer technologies.

These developments are particularly significant for Africa, where digitalisation is accelerating and inter-

est from hyperscale cloud providers and AI firms is growing. South Africa remains the regional leader in data-centre capacity, while countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt are emerging as key investment destinations. However, grid constraints, ageing infrastructure and limited transmission capacity continue to hinder sustainable growth.

Hitachi Energy aims to address these challenges by strengthening its regional presence and ensuring access to critical technologies. Its strategy emphasises localisation and partnerships, working closely with utilities, governments, industrial players and data-centre developers. Through customised engineering, service collaborations and digital solutions, the company seeks to improve grid visibility, optimise performance and enable reliable integration of renewable energy.

According to Mohamed Hosseiny, overseeing managing director for Africa, the company's global investments are designed to meet local needs and support long-term devel-

opment. By combining global scale with regional expertise, Hitachi Energy aims to help African markets build stable, adaptable and

affordable power systems capable of supporting AI growth, electrification and broader economic progress.



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# The new energy landscape for buildings will be enabled by e-mobility

By Grace Olorunsola, Schneider Electric

THE energy conversation around buildings has been shaped by well-known priorities: reducing consumption, improving efficiency, integrating renewables and stabilising supply.

Now a new player is making a tangible difference to the way buildings consume energy: The electric vehicle. The African EV market is projected to grow to nearly US\$6 billion by 2031, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of more than 50% in that period, according to reports.

Buildings are becoming a vital part of the e-mobility movement, which requires a new approach to energy management.

## WHY BUILDINGS ARE BECOMING THE NEW CHARGING HUBS

If EV chargers operate without intelligence, they will simply draw power whenever vehicles are plugged in. As more drivers arrive and plug in, the load climbs higher and higher. Eventually, the building may exceed its subscribed maximum power.

This can trigger financial penalties, increased electricity costs or worst-case scenarios: overloads that trip supply and cause blackouts, not only impacting the chargers but - worst case scenario - shutting down the entire building.

Even with DC fast chargers available, which can reduce charging time to 15 to 30 minutes, the reality is that most EV drivers prefer to charge when they are already parked for extended periods.

EVs require time to recharge. Depending on the battery size, charging infrastructure and charging speed, an EV can take up to 10 hours to charge fully using AC charging.

This is why EV charging is naturally shifting into the built environment: homes, office parks, shopping centres, hotels and mixed-use developments.

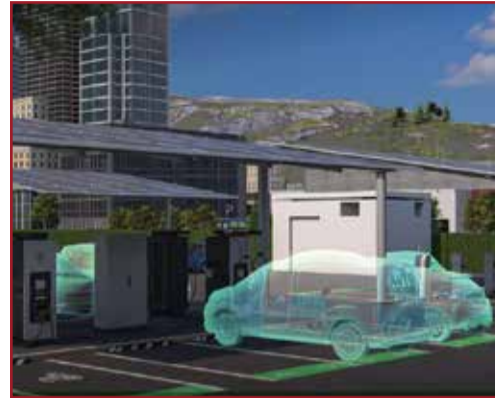
## EV CHARGING CHANGES THE ENERGY EQUATION FOR BUILDINGS

A single AC charger can demand up to 22 kW. Multiply that by 10 chargers in a commercial building and the building's electricity demand jumps dramatically.

If you add DC charging, buildings have to provide anywhere from 120 kW to 720 kW per charger, creating a level of demand that most existing building infrastructure is simply not designed to support without significant upgrades.

## SMART CHARGING - THE MISSING LINK

EV chargers must become part of an inte-



grated energy ecosystem, where the charger sits at the centre of multiple stakeholders:

- The building and its internal load profile;
- The electricity grid and its constraints;
- Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) such as solar PV and microgrids; and
- The EV drivers.

## LOAD MANAGEMENT: THE KEY TO EV-READY BUILDINGS

One of the most important capabilities enabling this future is dynamic load management.

In a building, there is always a maximum subscribed power limit. Smart load management ensures EV charging never pushes the building beyond this threshold.

Thus, instead of charging every vehicle at full power at the same time, a smart system monitors:

- The building's real-time consumption;
- The available capacity remaining; and
- The number of EVs currently charging.

When building consumption rises, the system automatically reduces charging power across vehicles, sharing the available energy intelligently. When consumption drops, the system increases charging power again, ensuring vehicles still charge efficiently but without compromising the building.

## EV CHARGING AND THE RISE OF MICROGRIDS

As EV chargers become embedded into buildings, the role of DERs becomes more important.

Microgrids, solar installations and battery storage systems can support charging demand while improving resilience and reducing reliance on unstable grid supply, especially during peak periods or in regions where grid reliability remains a challenge.

The combination of EV charging, energy management systems and distributed energy is what defines the emerging energy landscape for buildings: decentralised, flexible, digitally managed and increasingly driver centric.



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# Bolobedu solar power plant reaches commissioning

RICHARDS Bay Minerals (RBM) and international renewable energy company Voltalia this week announced the commissioning of the Bolobedu Solar Farm in Limpopo.

This is one of the largest solar plants in South Africa dedicated to meeting the energy needs of a single company, marking a critical step forward in RBM's commitment to sustainable mining into the future as part of the recently approved Zulti South project.

The first megawatt-hours of green electricity have been successfully fed into the national grid, marking a key milestone in the long-term partnership between both companies and South Africa's energy transition.

Following the agreement signed in 2022, Voltalia and its local Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) partners constructed the plant with a total installed capacity of 148 megawatts, which once fully operational, will reduce RBM's annual baseline greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10%, which is approximately 237,000 tonnes per year.

The renewable power is supplied to RBM's KwaZulu-Natal operations through a wheeling arrangement via the Eskom Transmission Network.

RBM Managing Director Werner Duvenhage said: "Commissioning of the Bolobedu Solar Farm is a defining moment for RBM as we celebrate 50 years of operations in South Africa. This initiative is not just about energy security, it is about the long-term sustainability of the business. As we break ground on Zulti South, this initiative paves the way for a cleaner energy future, contributing to both the national power grid and our global decarbonisation targets."

Voltalia Chief Executive Officer Robert Klein said: "The delivery of the first megawatt-hours



from Bolobedu illustrates our commitment to accelerating the decarbonisation of industries and supporting inclusive energy transition in South Africa involving local communities."

This initiative is part of RBM's broader portfolio of renewable energy projects, including wind power purchase agreements, which together are expected to reduce the operation's Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions by around 60% compared to a 2018 baseline.

Reflecting a shared commitment to transformation and local development, the project distinguishes itself as the first large-scale renewable energy initiative in the region to feature exclusive local female investors, ensuring that the transition to green energy creates direct equity and wealth for the host communities.

Beyond its technical achievement, the Bolobedu Solar Farm is already delivering strong benefits for the broader community. During construction, around 800 residents from the three host communities were employed, including 56% youth and 21% women. Local workers received on-the-job training in engineering support, solar panel installation and HSE awareness, providing many with their first formal employment opportunities.



# Partnership boosts engineering capability, expands welding tech access

**B**ABCOCK has been named the Preferred Partner for Lincoln Electric across Sub-Saharan Africa

The appointment signals a significant shift in how world-class welding technology will be delivered across the region.

“As Preferred Partner, we will offer Lincoln Electric’s full product range, covering every dimension of welding, from equipment and filler metals to automation, fume control, safety and PPE,” says Hendrik du Toit, Managing Director - Plant Services, at Babcock. “We will ini-

tially leverage Babcock’s existing business presence in Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Lesotho to ensure immediate product availability and technical support.”

Babcock will manage Lincoln Electric’s full product portfolio and provide relevant technical support through its established branch network and a selected network of sub-distributors.

Looking ahead, Babcock will bring Lincoln Electric’s products to new areas through expanding its specialised welding capability in



selected territories and further developing a strong agency network in markets without direct representa-

tion, serving the mining, power generation, petrochemical and manufacturing sectors.

Welding remains a critical and increasingly scarce skill in South Africa. In recognition of this, Babcock will establish a dedicated training and demonstration centre to drive meaningful skills development across the industry.

Babcock has for years delivered welding solutions, spanning equipment, consumables, automation and robotic systems, as part of a multi-brand distribution model

including Lincoln.

“As a major supplier of welding products, we are committed to advancing modern technology and equipping the workforce with the technical skills and knowledge needed for efficient and safe welding operations in Africa,” says Dhurusha Chetty, Head of Welding at Babcock.

Du Toit adds: “Our collaboration with Lincoln Electric is a powerful demonstration of what becomes possible when innovation meets strong sales and service support, delivering excellence at every stage of welding equipment procurement.”

# ABB app configurator speeds up grid protection design

**A**s distributed energy resources (DERs) scale rapidly across Africa and globally, the pressure to design safe, compliant and grid-stable protection systems has never been greater. ABB, a global leader in electrification solutions for the energy transition, is meeting this challenge head-on with its Application Configurator.

The Application Configurator is a free tool that enables engineers to generate a complete, validated bill of materials for grid-feeding protection systems in minutes rather than hours.

In an interview with ESI Africa (published by VUKA Group), experts explain how DER is reshaping the electricity network and how a smart solution makes the connection quick and manageable:

### DERs RESHAPING THE GRID

Rising DER penetration is fundamentally reshaping grid dynamics and challenging existing infrastructure. Grid-feeding protection (which prevents faults and islanding) is increasingly difficult to implement

given the diversity of grid codes, architectures and regional standards. Designing flexible, adaptive solutions is now essential to maintaining grid stability while keeping projects on schedule.

### OPPORTUNITY AND COMPLEXITY

South Africa exemplifies the scale of opportunity and the complexity of the challenge. The country is integrating a rapidly growing installed base of distributed energy resources into an already strained electricity grid. Grid connection capacity has long been a bottleneck, but a major national upgrade programme — encompassing new long-distance transmission lines and expanded large-scale transformer capacity — is now underway. This decade-long effort aims to ease severe congestion, address structural capacity constraints and lower barriers to connecting new renewable projects.

Although national loadshedding has been suspended since late March 2024, load reduction remains common in areas where local net-

works risk overloading. In this environment, grid-feeding protection systems play a critical role: they help stabilise installations during periods of high stress and protect vulnerable infrastructure from failure.

### AUTOMATIC DISCONNECTION IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

When DERs remain connected during a grid fault, they can amplify the problem rather than help contain it. If a localised grid issue occurs while DERs continue feeding power into an unstable system, what begins as a minor disturbance can escalate into a major disruption. Grid-feeding protection systems detect voltage and frequency deviations instantly, isolating DERs before cascade failures can develop thereby protecting grid stability and worker safety.

### APPLICATION CONFIGURATOR: FROM HOURS TO MINUTES

Selecting the right products for a grid-feeding system has traditionally been a time-consuming and error-

prone process, requiring engineers to cross-reference extensive data-sheets, technical catalogues and multiple product families. ABB’s Application Configurator fundamentally changes this workflow.

Through a guided four-step process, the tool automatically proposes the optimal electrical architecture based on project-specific parameters — including grid code standards, generation power, backup and interface devices, inverter details, short-circuit levels and connection configuration. It draws on ABB’s full product portfolio and built-in engineering expertise to recommend protection devices, interface relays, disconnecting devices, surge protection, accessories and communication or monitoring options.

The configurator automatically verifies selectivity, protection coor-

dination, short-circuit withstand ratings, interface protection requirements and component compatibility — significantly reducing the risk of mis-sizing or design errors. Users retain full flexibility to adjust quantities, swap components or add accessories at any stage, with recommendations updating instantly. The output is a complete, validated bill of materials tailored to the specific project.

### FREE ACCESS FOR ALL ENGINEERS

Application Configurator is available at no cost to any engineer or project team, whether existing ABB customers or those new to ABB solutions. Users simply create an account, input their project details and start configuring immediately.

# Booyco expands global defence footprint with mission-critical HVAC

**A**S geopolitical uncertainty drives renewed defence investment in many regions, South Africa-based Booyco Engineering is providing specialised industrial HVAC solutions to a global customer base.

Among its recent projects have been the design and manufacture of complex cooling systems for radar jamming shelters as well as for leading edge military amphibious vehicles.

According to Grant Miller, Executive Director at Booyco Engineering, the company’s decades of engineering experience and proven track record in mission-critical HVAC solutions has built its reputation in the defence sector.

“We engineer our systems to suit the demands of complicated military



equipment, designed for the harshest conditions while still meeting onerous specifications,” Miller says.

In one recent project, these custom-engineered solutions are being fitted to specialised hard-skinned radar jamming shelters - manufactured in South Africa by ADG Mobility for export. These shelters house sensitive electronic systems, radar-interference technology and ballistic

protection rated to withstand light arms fire.

“This environment creates severe thermal and electromagnetic demands,” Miller explains. “Not only must the HVAC system maintain stable internal temperatures for both personnel and electronics, but it must do so while complying with rigorous electromagnetic interference (EMI) standards.”

Booyco Engineering designed the system in accordance with US military standards 461F, which governs electromagnetic interference in military environments.

“When you are dealing with radar-related systems, even small emissions can compromise performance. So the HVAC unit itself must be part of the protection strategy,” he says.

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# Balancing control systems, remote monitoring and skills boosts food sector efficiency

THE convergence of specialist skills and advanced technology is proving pivotal across industry – a trend underscored by two recent projects completed by boiler operations and maintenance expert Associated Energy Services (AES) in the food manufacturing sector. Boiler operations and maintenance expert Associated Energy Services (AES) completed two projects recently, proving how the convergence of specialist skills and advanced technology are pivotal in the food manufacturing sector.

“Consistently collecting and interpreting data is critical to optimising efficiency and productivity when operating and maintaining boilers. Remote monitoring systems (RMS) are integral to ensure effective management and safety,” explains AES Commercial Director Dennis Williams.

“AES adds value by identifying and pre-empting problematic scenarios: applying a dynamic blend of control systems, remote monitoring and human skills, we not only prevent downtime but improve operational efficiencies and contain costs – while complementing and supporting complex production systems,” says Williams.

## A TALE OF TWO PROJECTS

The first project involved a long-standing food processing client whose outdated boiler control system had become costly to maintain. AES

was tasked with upgrading the system while retaining some existing equipment.

“The plan was to upgrade one boiler, and then after proof of concept, to update the other two. However, the year-end shutdown saw our client decide to do all three at once, giving AES an extremely tight timeline. We managed to do it even though there was some commissioning and fine-tuning in the months following the start-up,” says AES Projects Director Gavin Evezard.

A key feature of the upgraded system was the implementation of load balancing across the three boilers, ensuring that no single boiler carried a disproportionate share of the load.

The second project, undertaken for a new food sector client, involved the installation of a fully customised control and RMS solution. The system included a web-based interface that enabled real-time monitoring, data analysis and performance tracking.

“Although the system is based on our core control ethos, the client had very specific requirements. We therefore customised it to meet their needs, by incorporating different operating modes. At different times and in different sections of the plant, they have varying steam pressure requirements. We catered for all of that,” Evezard says.

Supply chain constraints were also a challenge, requiring AES to rethink



its approach to in-factory assembly and testing, focusing rather on on-site completion: “We had to get the standing boiler control system done so we could restart it – as the operating boiler was developing problems. The aim was to give our client the redundancy on steam that they needed. We had to optimise planning on our side to complete the project as soon as it was practical. We managed to get that equipment up and running quickly to minimise any delays.”

## FROM DATA TO DECISION-MAKING

Both projects highlight the growing importance of data-driven decision-making. RMS platforms allow operations management to monitor performance, investigate anomalies and conduct detailed root cause analyses, considering aspects such as fuel consumption, emissions and ensuring the right steam supply at the right pressure.

“When there are issues on the plant, we have all the data recorded on our RMS and can go back to see exactly what happened. We can do proper root cause analysis and thereby prevent any future incident or issue,” Evezard notes.

During the second project, AES incorporated additional metrics tailored to the client’s operational needs, including comparable fuel consumption rates and boiler performance indicators under manual and automatic operating modes.

Evezard emphasises that such customisation is essential in South Africa where many industrial boilers are old. “There is a large fleet of boilers which are between 30 and 60 years old. Original equipment manufacturers may no longer have the software available to diagnose or solve problems - and many operate offshore, making it expensive to bring them to South Africa. Our systems are in-house. We have the teams and skills – and the keys. We can diagnose and fix problems, getting boilers operational again and mitigating the risk and cost of downtime.”

## CRITICAL HUMAN FACTOR

Despite advances in automation and control technology, Williams and Evezard emphasise that human expertise remains indispensable.

“Unfortunately - with solid fuel boilers specifically - a degree of operator input is needed. The control system can only do so much, but at the end of the day, a human needs to do some checks and set up the boiler in line with production facility requirements,” Evezard emphasises.

Williams concurs, particularly regarding fuel quality and safety: “If you make things too hands-off, essential safety aspects may not be addressed. Consistent human oversight mitigates the risk associated with combustion and steam vessels under pressure.”

## LONG-TERM VALUE

Beyond immediate production efficiency gains, AES sees the two project examples cited as catalysts for longer-term partnerships. Williams notes that for AES, more than 75% of boiler upgrade projects evolve into ongoing service relationships: “The entire project becomes a proof of concept for the way forward,” he says.

Measurement is central to this value proposition: “When you have a measurable objective available, you can show the client what you are seeing in their plant and explain how you can assist. This provides tremendous value and also builds a relationship,” Evezard adds.

The enhanced visibility afforded by AES’s RMS and control systems is often transformative for clients.

# Modular firm doubles factory capacity to meet surging demand

WACO Modular has completed a major expansion of its manufacturing operations, adding a new 660m<sup>2</sup> undercover assembly area at its Jet Park facility in Boksburg and effectively doubling output capacity.

The investment comes amid rising demand for modular construction across South Africa, enabling the company to deliver faster and more resilient solutions under increasing project pressure.

Factory director Andries Stander says demand has accelerated, particularly in the education and mining sectors. “The education sector typically places pressure on production toward year-end, and in 2025 this was compounded by strong demand from mining projects. The expansion ensures we can deliver on both fronts without compromise,” he says.

The upgrade has reduced standard manufacturing lead times from four to six weeks to as little as one week, depending on project scope. This provides clients with greater certainty, helping to avoid delays and associated penalties. “We can now dispatch modular buildings within days, ena-



bling projects to progress faster and more profitably,” Stander adds.

Under Stander’s leadership, improved coordination between engineering, procurement and management has strengthened efficiency and accountability on the factory floor. Faster production cycles, improved quality and higher staff morale have supported the increase in output.

The expansion also introduces new technologies and semi-automation, including an upgraded stores management system to improve workflow, stock control and operational visibility. Purpose-built equipment and streamlined processes have reduced reliance on manual tasks, enhancing

efficiency and resilience.

Waco Modular continues to align with international manufacturing standards, supported by ongoing staff training and strengthened supervision. Safety remains a priority, with the facility surpassing one million man-hours without a lost-time injury.

“Safety is non-negotiable and a standard we will not compromise,” says Stander. The benefits are already evident across sectors, particularly in mining, where faster delivery of modular units is accelerating project timelines. “Our goal is to deliver smarter, faster and more resilient solutions,” Stander says.

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# Innovative MyLegrand App connects installers and stores in one platform

LEGRAND SA is introducing a new digital platform designed to strengthen engagement across its professional network, with the upcoming launch of the MyLegrand mobile application.

This App brings together commercial incentives, technical resources and business visibility into a single mobile platform, reflecting a growing shift towards digitally enabled support in the electrical sector in southern Africa.

More than a conventional loyalty tool, MyLegrand is developed as an integrated platform that connects Legrand, its partner stores and the installers who specify and work with Legrand's product range.

At partner store level, the platform is structured to enhance accessibility

and sales engagement. Participating outlets are listed in a searchable directory, allowing customers to locate stores by name or location, supported by integrated GPS functionality.

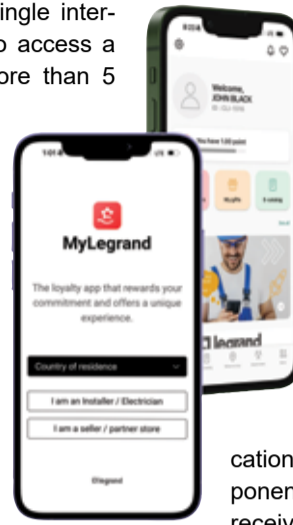
A performance-based programme enables sales teams to earn points linked to Legrand product sales, with rewards redeemable through an associated catalogue.

The App facilitates closer collaboration between stores and certified electricians by providing a referral network within the platform. End users can be directed towards qualified professionals to ensure service quality while strengthening relationships across the value chain.

For electricians and installers, MyLegrand consolidates a range of

practical tools into a single interface. Users are able to access a digital catalogue of more than 5 000 Legrand products, including technical data, alerts and the ability to create personalised reference lists. A structured loyalty programme allows professionals to accumulate and monitor reward points in real time based on product purchases, with redemption options available through an integrated rewards system.

Certified electricians and installers are listed within a dedicated direc-



tory, enabling them to showcase their expertise, highlight areas of specialisation and improve their accessibility to potential clients. In this way, the App functions not only as a technical and rewards tool, but also as a channel for business development.

Real-time communication is another central component of the platform. Users receive notifications relating to product launches, promotions, technical webinars and training opportunities, ensuring that stores and installers are kept abreast with

developments at Legrand.

The introduction of MyLegrand represents a practical move towards digital integration within the electrical distribution and installation environment, where streamlined access to information, incentives and professional networks is becoming increasingly important. By combining these elements into a single platform, Legrand aims to simplify engagement while supporting practical, day-to-day business activities across its business.

The App will be available via major mobile platforms, with onboarding aimed at retail partners and installation professionals seeking to enhance operational efficiency and participation within the Legrand network.

# Beyond the gauge: The next era of measurement and instrumentation

IN an industrial ecosystem that prizes uptime, precision and digital visibility, measurement and instrumentation technologies have quietly shifted from passive data collectors to active enablers of smarter operations. What once were simple gauges and switches are now high-performance digital sensors, radar systems and connected devices that help engineers see deeper into processes: in real time, under extreme conditions and with minimal human intervention.



pressure or temperature readings can be aggregated, visualised and acted upon across a plant or even globally. The IoT sensors market gives a sense of scale: after exceeding USD 17.5 billion in 2024, it's forecast to accelerate at a staggering CAGR of around 36 % through 2034, driven by industrial automation and connected infrastructure.

Instrumentation is only as valuable as the insight it delivers. Sensors that speak digital protocols and connect to enterprise systems enable a new era of predictive analytics. Industrial IoT adoption continues to surge, with forecasts showing the market expanding rapidly through the next decade as plants embrace connected assets and remote monitoring.

Raw measurement is only step one. The next frontier is using data to predict failures. When pressure spikes or vibration signatures change, advanced analytics and AI can infer equipment stress, flag a likely failure window, and help schedule servicing before breakdowns occur. This kind of predictive maintenance shifts engineering from reactive fire-fighting to proactive optimisation, improving plant availability and cutting unplanned downtime.

Vega champions this trend with tools like myVega, a digital platform that allows engineers to configure devices, access documentation and manage instrument data from a single interface. Combined with Bluetooth or fieldbus connectivity, this capability transforms ordinary measurement into a dynamic data feed powering smarter decisions.

The real payoff here is not just raw data; it's the context and predictive insight that emerges when disparate measurements are stitched together into higher-level analytics. Modern instrumentation platforms feed into cloud systems and analytics engines

where machine learning can spot patterns, predict deviations and surface actionable alerts, long before operators would have noticed a shift.

### SMARTER, SMALLER, MORE CONNECTED

The measurement and instrumentation landscape is heading towards instruments that are simultaneously smaller, smarter and more integrated with digital ecosystems. Modular

and software-defined measurement platforms are enabling configuration flexibility and scalability in test & measurement deployments.

For process engineers and automation architects, these advancements bring tangible benefits:

- Greater precision in challenging process environments
- Faster insight into plant health and performance metrics
- Lower total cost of ownership through maintenance-free, non-contact technologies.

### FROM ANALOGUE TO SMART

Industrial sensors today aren't just measuring values, they're communicating them. According to recent market analysis, more than 65 % of new industrial sensor installations now feature smart sensors with real-time data capabilities, driven by demand for remote monitoring and predictive insights across manufacturing, energy and chemical industries

This shift matters. Smart sensors can pre-process data at the edge, filter noise, validate readings, and even flag anomalies before they propagate into bigger problems downstream. For engineers tasked with maintaining process control, these capabilities mean fewer blind spots and faster response times, especially in complex systems where temperature, pressure or level variations can signal process drift or potential faults. The sheer growth in the sensor space is telling too. The global smart sensors market was valued at nearly USD 59 billion in 2024 and is projected to expand astronomically over the coming decade.

### RADAR TAKES THE LEAD

One of the most striking technology shifts in industrial instrumentation

has been the accelerated adoption of radar level measurement, particularly non-contact 80 GHz radar. Radar's edge is not just hype: it's physics. Unlike ultrasonic devices that rely on sound and can be thrown off by dust, temperature swings or foam, radar measurements use electromagnetic waves that are insensitive to such disturbances, meaning more reliable readings in harsh industrial environments.

Vega's radar sensors, like the Vegapuls family, demonstrate these benefits practically: compact radar units deliver precise distance measurements with very narrow beam angles that easily navigate around internal obstructions such as ladders or agitators.

The market trends back this up: microwave and radar solutions accounted for more than 35 % of the installed base in level sensing in 2025 and are expected to grow at a CAGR around 9.5 % through 2031, as industries favour non-contact measurement for reliability and low maintenance.

### SOFTWARE, CONNECTIVITY AND THE IOT IMPERATIVE

Instrumentation no longer lives in isolation. Sensors and measurement systems are now nodes in broader process networks, part of the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT). This connectivity means that level,

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# Compressed air firm expands with Pinetown branch

INTEGRATED Air Solutions, a leading supplier of premium compressed air machines and services, has officially opened a branch in Pinetown's Westmead industrial area, expanding its diesel and electric air compressor solutions and service support for KwaZulu-Natal customers.

The new branch led by branch manager Jaco Fourie and supported by two qualified field technicians, will provide local accessibility while maintaining the company's national service strength.

"This branch is a key milestone for Integrated

Air Solutions," says Grant Robinson, managing director. "It brings our customerfirst approach closer to clients in the greater Durban area while enabling faster service and delivery across KZN."

The Pinetown area forms part of the company's broader expansion strategy, enhancing sales, rentals, servicing, and after-market support. Its central location avoids traffic congestion and ensures timely service to inland, north, and south coast operations. Stock maintained at the branch, including units shipped directly via Durban port, reduces delays and costs,

critical for rental customers who require immediate deployment.

The branch workshop can handle on-site repairs and larger, more complex jobs, with specialised refurbishments remaining in Johannesburg to ensure expert service. Integrated Air Solutions also maintains service stock to guarantee uninterrupted operations for its clients.

The branch supports a wide range of industries, including construction, road building, manufacturing, packaging, and food and beverage, while also servicing ports and harbours

with applications such as ship cleaning, sand-blasting, and spray painting. The company is exploring further rental solutions for fixed installations within harbour operations.

Robinson concludes: "By placing expertise, products, and after-market support closer to customers, Integrated Air Solutions delivers greater reliability and unmatched value across KwaZulu-Natal. Wherever air is needed, we deliver with excellence."

Celebrated the opening of their new Durban office together with some valued customers



From left: Theuns Naudè & John Russell, Integrated Fire Technology; Nolan Sigamoney, Brigit Fire; and Shantelle Alberts, Integrated Fire Technology



From left: Dion Britz, Wayne Banche, Charmaine Scheepers and Joash Chetty, Babcock; and Johan Brand, Integrated Air Solutions



From left: Jaco Fourie and Grant Robinson, Integrated Air Solutions; with Faan Pienaar and Stephan Reardon, Volvo Penta

# Skills development as a foundation for sustainable renewable energy projects

By Pierre Bekker, Director at Quyn International Outsourcing

SOUTH Africa's renewable energy build programme is visibly reshaping the country's power grid. Wind farms rise along coastal ridges, solar plants stretch across arid plains and battery facilities are increasingly embedded into regional networks.

But infrastructure alone is not enough. The long-term success of these projects depends on something far more fundamental: people.

Skills development is fast becoming the bedrock of sustainable renewable energy projects. Without deliberate investment in local capacity and structured workforce management to support it, even the most technically advanced site will struggle to deliver lasting value to investors, employers and host communities.

### REMOTE LOCATIONS, REAL CHALLENGES

Traditional coal and gas power stations were built near industrial centres, where skilled workers were readily available. Renewable energy projects are different. They are located where natural resources are strongest, often in remote or rural areas far from established skills bases.

This creates immediate challenges. Smaller towns may not have enough qualified electricians, engineers or construction managers to

support large-scale developments. Contractors frequently need to bring in skilled professionals from urban centres. Alongside recruitment come practical considerations such as accommodation, transport, payroll administration and compliance management for a geographically dispersed workforce. While importing skills may solve short-term construction needs, it increases costs and does little to strengthen the local labour market. Over time, this model is neither efficient nor sustainable.

### WHY LOCAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

When skills development is embedded into project planning from the outset, the trajectory of a renewable development programme changes. As developers define 12-to-24-month timelines, clear upskilling targets should form part of the project's social and economic commitments. Local candidates can be identified early and enrolled in structured training programmes aligned to site requirements.

Whether developing semi-skilled electricians, plant operators or junior technicians, the goal is clear: leave the community more capable than before the project began.

For employers, this reduces reliance on external contractors over time, lowers accommodation and travel costs and improves workforce stability during operations and maintenance. It also strengthens stakeholder relationships and reinforces

the project's social licence to operate.

For communities, the benefits extend beyond temporary construction roles. Workers gain recognised competencies that improve their long-term employability, either on operational sites or on future renewable projects elsewhere.

### THE BRIDGING ROLE OF A TES PROVIDER

This is where a Temporary Employment Services (TES) provider plays a critical role. Renewable projects require rapid mobilisation, compliance oversight and effective workforce coordination, particularly in remote areas.

A TES provider acts as the bridge between contractor and community

by sourcing local labour, managing recruitment processes and ensuring employment practices meet regulatory standards.

On top of administration, a TES partner can support structured upskilling initiatives by identifying suitable candidates, coordinating training programmes and tracking workforce development targets. By stepping in to manage payroll, timesheets, contracts and compliance, the TES provider removes the administrative burden from engineering teams. This allows contractors to focus on delivery while ensuring the workforce is properly supported.

In remote environments, this integrated approach is essential. It ensures workforce management is cohesive and that skills development commitments translate into measur-

able outcomes.

### SKILLS PORTABILITY IN A PROJECT-BASED INDUSTRY

Renewable energy is inherently project driven. Construction peaks and then tapers off, and new sites emerge in different provinces. This makes skills portability critical.

Experience gained on a solar or wind project, particularly in electrical systems, commissioning or plant maintenance, is highly valuable across the expanding renewables market. As South Africa grows its clean energy capacity, experienced personnel are quickly absorbed by larger developers, while smaller contractors entering the market require workers who understand renewable installations.

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