

Rhino Group celebrates renewable energy achievements

The Rhino Group, a sustainable solutions company in the Eastern Cape, has signed a deal with Australia's leading biogas company, Quantum Power Ltd., to assist large-scale farmers to go off-grid amid South Africa's load shedding crisis.



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The deal will see some of the largest biodigesters in South Africa rolled out to large-scale piggeries, dairies, dairy factories, abattoirs and cattle feedlots.

"Abattoirs require consistent cold temperatures in their cold rooms," said Rhino Water MD, Sarel Bam. Rhino Water is the Rhino Group subsidiary directly involved in the deal with Quantum Power Ltd.

"Load shedding often affects their operations and an alternative supply of electricity is critical for food security. Biogas supplies a constant supply of electricity regardless of time of the day, and is dependent on the quantity of gas produced only. In addition, biogas can be stored to maintain a constant supply of gas to generators," Bam said.

Meat producers

The roll-out has been hailed by farming organisations such as the Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO) in the wake of crippling load shedding by parastatal Eskom.

RPO chief executive, Gerhard Schutte, said it was time for farmers to become more self-sustainable wherever possible. "In the abattoir industry and the rest of the value chain where the maintenance of the cold chain is vital, the consequences of load shedding is major."

Meanwhile, group subsidiary Rhino Lighting has been engaged in an energy efficiency project sponsored by the UK government, seeing companies throughout the Eastern Cape reap huge financial rewards from an otherwise costly exercise aimed at reducing their reliance on the strained electricity grid.

Rhino Lighting is one of the auditors who have been included in the private sector energy efficiency project. Rhino Lighting managing director, Heather McEwan, said several businesses in the region had already benefited from the audits, including several Spar franchises, the BKB head office, Grey High School, Aberdare Cables and EP Cricket.

Solar project

In June Rhino Energy, another Rhino Group company, successfully completed an installation of the largest solar photovoltaic project in the Eastern Cape. The installation, at the BKB headquarters in Port Elizabeth, is capable of generating 750,000kWh of energy annually - enough to power more than 200 average-sized households continuously. The solar PV system covers 3,200m² of BKB warehouse roof area, generating a peak capacity of 400kVA, which equates to roughly 40% of the energy needs at the headquarters.

"The rising cost of electricity, coupled with the various incentives which are available for businesses deciding to go green make this a very exciting industry," said Brian van Niekerk, MD of Rhino Group. "Going off-grid is something we at Rhino Group have seen becoming an increasing trend both in the Eastern Cape and countrywide."

Another eco-success being celebrated is Rhino Water's clean-up of one of the province's largest lakes in an urban area, North End Lake alongside Port Elizabeth's R1.2bn NMB Stadium. Using probiotics, the Rhino Water in collaboration with Stellenbosch company Probio will treat the polluted lake water and lake bed sludge. After treatment the water quality will meet legal requirements to allow for water contact sports.

"We will disperse 74,000 litres of the probiotic solution and 25 tons of probiotic bokashi clay balls into the lake over a period of two months, while monitoring the improvement of the water quality to quantify and verify the effectiveness of the dosing," said Bam. "This process is entirely natural and not harmful to the environment."

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