

# Minister welcomes Sasol decision to withdraw legal action

PRETORIA: Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa has welcomed the decision by Sasol to withdraw legal action against her and the National Air Quality Officer in the High Court.



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"Sasol had approached the court to review and set aside pollution emission standards, which are legislated in terms of the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act (39) of 2004," Department of Environmental Affairs spokesperson Albi Modise said.

He said the department played a key role in ensuring that the constitutional right of South Africans to an environment that is not harmful to health and well-being was always taken into consideration, while ensuring that socio-economic growth is not hampered.

One of the objectives of the Air Quality Act is to ensure ecologically sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

"Sasol had applied for postponements of timeframes for compliance with the Minimum Emission Standards in terms of section 21 of the National Environmental Management Air Quality Act 39 of 2004, which can only be granted for a period not exceeding five years," Modise said.

The department had received 37 applications for postponements from other industries as well, including Engen, Shell, Eskom and Anglo American Platinum.

"The allowance for postponement applications in the regulations provides transitional arrangements for industries that were in existence in 2010 (when the regulations were first promulgated) to take the necessary action and make the required investments towards compliance with the minimum emission standards," Modise said.

The decision on postponement applications was communicated on 24 February.

"No decision to grant a postponement is reached lightly, but reached upon careful consideration of all variables. We remain mindful of the need to balance environmental protection with economic development," Minister Molewa said.

Since 1994, South Africa has put in place progressive environmental legislation, which advances the promotion and integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic, social and environmental dimensions.

"In the past 21 years, government has facilitated a dramatic and sustained process of forming environmental guiding principles, institution-building and restructuring, legislation and policy development that recognises the intricate linkages between socio-economic developments and environmental stewardship," Modise said.

The Department of Environmental Affairs is committed to the principle of sustainable development that recognises the interdependency between economic growth, social equity and environmental integrity.

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