

Hi-tech plant to boost jobs, reduce waste to landfill

Mpact Polymers' new state-of-the-art, bottle-to-bottle operation that produces recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) will benefit waste reduction and job creation in SA.



rPET is the recycled raw material used for the manufacturing of new PET bottles from previously used PE bottles and is a substitute for virgin PET derived from crude oil.

Speaking at the recent opening of the plant, Deputy Trade and Industry Minister Mzwandile Masina said income opportunities will be created through an estimated 1,000 jobs, as there will be greater demand for collectors, small businesses and buy-back centres, which will assist Mpact in reaching its collection targets.

Mpact Polymers will process 29,000 tonnes of post-consumer PET bottles diverted from landfills each year to produce 21,000 tonnes of rPET for food and beverage packaging. About 186,000m³ of landfill space will be saved annually as a result, while CO₂ emissions will be reduced by about 53,000 tonnes each year.

Mpact Polymers' R350m plant in Wadeville, Germiston is the first in Africa to meet The Coca-Cola Company's full certification for PET bottles to package the company's soft drinks. The operation's recycling process complies with European Union Food Safety Authority specifications.

The new operation enjoys the backing of the departments of environmental affairs, trade and industry and economic development in promoting job creation, reducing waste to landfill and improving rPET production that will help to reduce the carbon footprint of the food and beverage industry.

The plant has also brought benefits to sister company Mpact Plastics, which obtains all its rPET from the new Mpact Polymers operation.

Kallie Albertse, GM at Mpact Plastics' Wadeville plant, says the company's environmental strategy focuses on increasing the use of rPET to reduce carbon footprint, reducing waste to landfill, managing energy use and developing lightweight preforms, bottles and jars.

He says some of the plant's carbonated soft drinks preform production for ABI is on 10% rPET and it is

working on a 25% solution, and the company has trials running for a number of customers at 25% rPET.

Mpact Plastics is one of SA's largest PET converters, manufacturing both preforms and bottles for the carbonated soft drinks, food and beverage markets, as well as a leading player in the wide-mouth PET jar market, and a market leader in hot-fill technology for PET bottles.

Albertse says the use of world-class technology is a competitive strength of Mpact Plastics, enabling the company to achieve its environmental strategy goals and improve the quality and efficiency of production. Mpact's operations in the plastics business are ISO 9001 compliant and accredited.

According to JD Burnett, GM at Mpact Versapak, its operation in the Western Cape is also British Retail Consortium certified.

He says one of Mpact's competitive strengths is its emphasis on employing cutting-edge technology to improve energy consumption and environmental and packaging performance, thereby bringing additional benefits for customers.

"The quality of technology employed has a major impact on the quality of the product produced, which is the reason Mpact only utilises world-class machinery. Technology is changing rapidly; we constantly reinvest to remain at the competitive edge of the market. Our technology, technical expertise and understanding of the market's requirements allow us to produce the right products at the right price.

"We differentiate ourselves in the market through our range of products, technical innovation, quality and service levels," says Burnett.

Paul Visagie, GM for Mpact Plastics' FMCG division in Pinetown and Atlantis, confirms the company uses the best available technology that delivers increased efficiencies and maximises output.

He says the utilisation of injection in-mould labelling technology, which fuses a customer's label into the wall of the product in one process, is a good example of using technology that both improves the client's production and Mpact's production process.

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