

Energy efficiency 'at top of Wal-Mart's agenda'

US giant Wal-Mart is the world's largest private purchaser of energy and even though it opened its 10000th store last week, its energy bills have been declining, the group's vice-president of international design and construction, Charles Zimmerman, said yesterday, 28 November.

By [Annaleigh Vallie](#) 29 Nov 2011

Zimmerman was in SA this week to share Wal-Mart's knowledge of energy efficiency, with its subsidiary Massmart and other retailers. He is responsible for co-ordinating the architectural and engineering system for Wal-Mart's international retail facilities and has a special focus on energy efficiency.

"Wal-Mart's number two operating expense is electricity, and with energy costs rising, it is on top of our agenda," Zimmerman said.

Energy efficiency, waste management (especially reducing packaging waste) and sustainable agriculture involving emerging farmers had always been on Massmart's list of goals, corporate affairs head Brian Lerc said.

"We have always been committed to reducing our environmental footprint but have sometimes battled to get cost-effective access to new ideas and innovations. The Wal-Mart transaction will help us overcome this, and will hopefully also assist to promote wider adoption within the local industry," he said.

Wal-Mart's purchasing power has allowed it to innovate and at the same time reduce the costs of the innovation. Zimmerman used light-emitting diode (LED) lighting as an example, which Wal-Mart developed with General Electric and is now an industry standard.

Electricity-saving innovations at new Makro stores have already led to a 25% reduction in energy consumption, and with Wal-Mart on board the company is hoping to increase this saving.

Wal-Mart plans that by 2015 it will be supplied 100% by renewable energy, will create zero waste, will have made a commitment to sustainable agriculture, and will have pledged to sell \$1bn of food sourced from 1-million small and medium-sized farmers.

Source: *Business Day*