

# Study aims to identify drivers for change in plastics industry

The Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Education and Training Authority (merSETA), in association with Plastics|SA, has launched a pilot study in order to develop a better understanding of the shape and size of the SA plastics industry.

According to Danny Sour, chairman of the merSETA Plastics Chamber, there are various factors impacting on the industry's future. "We are hoping to identify the key drivers for change, with particular reference to skills priorities and possible growth scenarios with this industry-wide research project", he said.

As the umbrella body representing the local plastics industry, Plastics|SA has been tasked with the responsibility of managing the communication to industry partners and for collecting information and feedback from its members.

## A knowledge gap

"The growth we have experienced in the plastics manufacturing, recycling and related industries during the past five years has left us with a knowledge gap regarding the exact shape and size of our industry," explained Anton Hanekom, executive director of Plastics|SA. "We are hoping to gather up-to-date and vital important information about our industry with this research project," he added.

Although the number of people employed in the industry is estimated to be between 45 000 and 63 000, exact figures are currently unavailable. Similarly, information about industry demographics, such as race, age, gender and disability, or about the skills profile and needs of employees is either non-existent or outdated.

"This project has the potential to benefit all industry partners, as it will provide the information needed to improve the government's grant system, which incentivises companies to train in skills that will add the most value to the plastics sector," Hanekom said.

## Key objectives

Specifically, it is hoped that the gathered information will help to achieve the following two key objectives:

- Mapping out and describing several jobs in the plastics industry in order to avoid any misunderstandings and confusion relating to job descriptions, remuneration and skills levels
- Introducing an effective forecasting dimension for the industry, such as future anticipated growth and challenge areas and how the local plastics industry will position itself in terms of Chinese imports, global downsizing, the green economy, waste, entrepreneurship and innovation in the local market.

In the need for research on these clearly identified areas, independent researchers Christoph Vorwerk and Fiona Farquharson have been appointed to conduct empirical research. They will collect data by means of an online survey (consisting of a company profile, employee profile and a section on skills and training needs) which will be emailed to the plastics industry and through the hosting of three regional workshops:

- Western Cape: Tuesday, 4 September, 2012, from 8.30am to 4pm at the Plastics|SA Offices: Unit D Olympic Park, 969 Voortrekker Road, Maitland, Cape Town.
- KZN: 11 September, 2012, from 8.30am to 4pm at the Plastics|SA Offices: KZN Experimental College Old Natal Training Centre, Cnr Richmond and Surprise Roads, Westmead, Pinetown
- Gauteng: 13 September, 2012, from 8.30am to 4pm at the Plastics|SA Head Office: 18 Gazelle Avenue, Corporate Park South, Midrand

These regional workshops will investigate issues relating to the industry and their impact on the skills development in each sector, as well as offer dedicated time for attendees to complete the survey on their laptops or resolve issues that may exist regarding submitting the surveys. Plastics|SA will provide guests with the necessary facilities to complete the survey at the venue, such as wireless Internet coverage connection, although attendees are welcome to bring their own 3G cards for this purpose.

"We are hoping to achieve a minimum survey response of 20 percent and are, therefore, appealing for the co-operation and participation of the industry decision makers, such as MDs and operational directors of companies in the plastics industry, as we strive to develop a clear understanding of the shape and size of the plastics industry in South Africa, the factors impacting on its future, and the key drivers for change, with particular reference to skills priorities and possible growth scenarios," Hanekom concluded.

For further information about the survey, workshops or assistance with the completion of the survey, conta

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