

Contact: Monya Vermaak  
Telephone: (011) 314-4021  
Cell: (079) 155-6266  
Email: Monya.Vermaak@plasticssa.co.za  
Website: [www.plasticsinfo.co.za](http://www.plasticsinfo.co.za)

## PLASTICS INDUSTRY HELPS SOUTH AFRICANS SAVE WATER AND DEAL WITH IMPACT OF DROUGHT

**Wednesday, 14 February 2018.** It was once said that innovation is not born from a dream, but from a struggle. As a nation facing the impact of drought and water shortages in many of our provinces, this sentiment has proven to be particularly true for the South African plastics industry. More than any other material, plastics have been relied upon to assist South Africans in dealing with the drought and accompanying water shortages.

For the past few years, lack of innovation and threats of cheap imports from overseas have been two of the biggest challenges facing the local plastics industry. "Our industry has been presented with a unique opportunity to be innovative and to meet very real needs that exist in the marketplace, and I'm proud to say that we are delivering with excellence", says Plastics|SA, Executive Director, Anton Hanekom. "Never before have we seen such a high demand for a wide variety of plastic products – whether it be for pool covers, water tanks and storage containers, plastic pipelines, artificial grass or bottled water".

With the threat of "Day Zero" looming on the horizon, i.e. when chronic water shortages may force Cape Town authorities to turn off the taps, suppliers have had to work hard to keep up with the demand.

According to Charlotte Metcalf, CEO of the South African National Bottled Water Association (SANBWA), the increase in use and demand for bottled water has also underscored the importance of recycling PET bottles. "Because of the convenience of PET bottles to collect, save and consume bottled water, we have seen a marked increase in the amount of 5-liter bottles entering the market in recent months," she says.

SANBWA highlights that one of the most important features of PET bottles is that they are not 'single-use' bottles and are not trash. "When PET bottles are recycled, they reduce the water footprint of that bottle by up to 25%. In addition, they are used to manufacture new bottles for water or beverages, or recycled into many new and useful products such as polyester fibre for duvets and pillows, jeans and t-shirts, and re-usable shopping bags. The latest post-consumer PET recycling rate was above 55% (according to PETCO), an impressive figure," Metcalf explains, adding that water bottles are also reused in innovative new ways, such as mini-taps for hand washing etc.

Bottled water suppliers such as Aquellé and Bené Water have gone one step farther to help Capetonians. Aquellé embarked on a two-day journey from its KwaZulu-Natal head office to donate almost 30,000 litres of bottled water to the elderly and infirm in the city. Similarly, Bené Water delivered truckloads of natural spring water for the desperate animals in the Cape as part of their efforts to bring relief to the water scarce city.

Another example of a plastic product that has been in high demand and where manufacturers are bending over backwards to assist residents in the Western Cape, is water tanks. According to Grant Nesor, Managing Director of JoJo Tanks, the extent and intensity of the demand in this province has come as a surprise to their company.

"Traditionally, the Western Cape was the smallest market for our tanks. Today, we are supplying more than ten times our long term average. We are having to supply tanks from our eight factories around the country and transport tanks from as far afield as Pietermaritzburg and Groblersdal to address the ever increasing backlog for tanks resulting from demand significantly exceeding installed capacity in this geography," Grant says.

Water tanks are rotational moulded, made from 2 layers of high-quality, virgin polyethylene with the outer layer being UV-resistant and the inner layer a black food grade liner, and are used throughout South Africa for storing water.



Above: Charlotte Metcalf, CEO of SANBWA





*Above: Grant Neser,  
Managing Director of  
JoJo Tanks*

Medium and heavy duty versions of these tanks are used to store a variety of products such as fertilisers, industrial chemicals and diesel. Not only are the water tanks UV- and corrosion-resistant, they prevent algae growth, are easy to transport, handle and install, have low maintenance costs, are easily repaired and are available in a wide variety of different colours and sizes.

Trying to do their part to assist the country cope with the drought without capitalising on the surge in demand, Grant says JoJo Tanks have not increased the price of their tanks in the Western Cape relative to other provinces. “In fact, we are bearing the extra transportation and logistical costs ourselves. We are taking a long term perspective and are not focussed on short term profits,” he says. They have, however, expanded their product range to include backwash tanks for swimming pools, accessories for rainwater harvesting and municipal back up and greywater harvesting solutions.

“It has always been our motto to make our customers’ lives easier. Plastics products have definitely adapted, developed and changed to meet the needs of society, says Neil Collier, Operations Manager of Alplas Plastics. Situated in Killarney Gardens, just north of Cape Town, Alplas uses injection moulding as its primary conversion process to convert raw material into high-precision, moulded articles. According to Collier, the products that they have seen the biggest increase in demand for over recent months were products that water can be stored or conveyed in.

“Our biggest sellers have been our 10 and 13 litre water buckets, bowls, and our big water bottles that are available in 11.4 litre or 18.9 litre capacity. We have also introduced new products such as a Laundry Basket and Laundry Bin in response to our Western Cape customers’ demand for increasing our houseware range,” he says.

“The versatility of plastics has an important role to play in our modern lifestyle: lightweight - yet extremely dependable, recyclable and manufactured to last a long time. Whilst we do not wish to diminish the negative impact this water shortage will have on our way of life or economy, we want to believe that some good must come from this struggle. As a nation, we have learned to appreciate our resources and to be less wasteful. The drought has also taught us stewardship and given us greater empathy with many of our fellow South Africans who have had to live without running water long before the threat of Day Zero became a reality.

Water preservation for the years to come is everyone’s responsibility. South Africa has the potential to become a water-barren land when compared to other countries that experience regular, plentiful rainfall. For this reason, we are encouraging the plastics industry to continue developing solutions to assist citizens and municipalities with minimising the use of water extracted from our dams, but also to make it easier to cope with the drought,” Hanekom concludes.

For more information, visit [www.plasticsinfo.co.za](http://www.plasticsinfo.co.za)

ENDS