

Press release for immediate release

PLASTICS: AN UNSUNG HERO IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Johannesburg, June 5, 2024 – On this World Environment Day, as global awareness about the environment reaches its peak, it is crucial to highlight the often-overlooked benefits of plastics in protecting our planet. While plastics have faced significant criticism, the plastics industry worldwide, and particularly in South Africa, is diligently working to address environmental concerns and showcase the eco-friendly potential of plastics.

Over the past few years, Plastics SA (the umbrella body representing the South African plastics industry), has continually been at the forefront of various environmental initiatives. These include providing training to municipal waste managers and waste pickers, supporting river catchment projects and clean-ups held around the country on beaches, rivers, and in communities.

“Our sustainability and education efforts are part of a broader strategy to enhance recycling rates and promote the circular economy,” explains Douw Steyn, Sustainability Director at Plastics SA.

One of the key advantages of plastics is their lightweight nature, which significantly reduces transportation carbon emissions compared to heavier materials. This characteristic helps to lower the overall carbon footprint of products, making plastics a more environmentally friendly option for packaging and other applications. Furthermore, plastics' durability and versatility enable the creation of products that can replace more resource-intensive materials, thus conserving natural resources.

“Extensive research has proven time and again that in most cases plastics have a lower carbon footprint than many other packaging materials. It is, however, essential to ensure that plastics are recycled to support a circular economy and are diverted from landfill. By doing so, we not only mitigate the environmental impact of plastic waste but also harness the numerous benefits that plastics offer,” says Steyn.

In South Africa, some of Plastics SA's initiatives that are making a tangible difference include:

- **Training and Empowerment:** By providing essential training to municipal waste managers and waste pickers, Plastics SA is enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of recycling operations. This not only supports job creation but also ensures that more plastic waste is diverted from landfills.
- **River Catchment Projects:** These projects aim to reduce plastic pollution in waterways, protecting aquatic ecosystems and ensuring cleaner water sources for communities.
- **Community Clean-ups:** Organizing clean-ups on beaches, rivers, and in local communities helps to directly tackle litter and raise awareness about the importance of proper waste disposal. These efforts contribute to a cleaner environment and promote a sense of community responsibility.

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"Plastics SA is committed to driving positive environmental change. Our projects are focussed on addressing the problem of plastic leakage into the environment head-on while highlighting the material's potential to contribute to environmental sustainability. As we celebrate World Environment Day, it is vital to recognise that plastics, when managed responsibly, can play a significant role in protecting our environment. By continuing to improve recycling systems, investing in innovative solutions, and educating the public about responsible plastic use, the plastics industry is paving the way for a more sustainable future," Steyn concludes.

For more information about Plastics SA's initiatives, visit www.plasticsinfo.co.za.