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YOUR LINK TO INDUSTRY & BUSINESS

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AUTO POLICY: CKD IS THE 'TREASURE CHEST'

OVER decades, South Africa has built a formidable automotive industry. Last year, the country exported over 400,000 vehicles to global markets, setting a new record, with an increase of 4,4% over the previous year. It was the continuation of an upward trend since 2021, according to Naamsa.

In the broader South African context, this is not a 'struggling' sector. It has maintained global competitiveness amid numerous compounding factors that have hammered South African businesses, including load-shedding, floods, logistics failures, and deteriorating local services. The country's Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), managed to produce nearly 600,000 units in 2025, which was 15,7% more than the previous year.

POLICY ADJUSTMENTS

The automotive industry was one of the first sectors to adopt a Masterplan, an aspirational framework that pulled stakeholders together to articulate a shared vision of growth for the sector. Justin Barnes, director of the Toyota Wessels Institute for Manufacturing Studies, and an associate professor at the Gordon Institute of Business Science at the University of Pretoria, was instrumental in the creation of the South African Automotive Masterplan SAAM) 2035. In an interview with EC Industrial Business News, he says he is disappointed that discussions around the industry seem to have become defensive and lost sight of the aspirational goals set in that plan.

"The automotive industry is a catalyst for industrial growth. Next to the aeronautical industry, it has the greatest technology spillover effect, and globally it has been shown to have the biggest multiplier effect. We should be looking at selling 1,2 million locally-produced vehicles in the local market and have 1,4 million vehicles in production with 60% local content. That would be 225,000 jobs. There's all this exciting potential that's not being realised," Barnes says.

He explains that, while the SAAM 2035 framework proposes ambitious goals and acts as a guide for policy, programmes like the Automotive Production Development Programme (APDP) sit within that broader framework. "Our policy is legislated until the end of 2026, so the APDP is due for review and needs to be changed or extended before the end of the year."

In presentations to the Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry on 27 January, the chief director: automotives, at the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Mkhululi Mlota said a comprehensive South African automotive policy review is currently being carried out to deal with challenges plaguing the sector to revatilise and ensure its rapid growth.

Dr Tebogo Makube, acting deputy director general: sectors branch, told the same session that a suite of proposals aimed at reviving the sector are being considered. These include reviewing the customs tariff structure, developing a battery manufacturing policy, attracting new vehicle manufacturers and reviewing the ad valorem tax on light motor vehicles.

Barnes, who has a large amount of proprietary data that he uses for modelling, says he is not involved in the current policy review and that, in this instance, it is an internal government process.

THE APDP

There is much discussion and expectation around how the revised APDP will accommodate new independent importers and a trend towards Semi-Knocked-Down (SKD) assemblies being set up in the country.

Image: Freepik

In context, the current APDP 2 is an evolution of the previous APDP, MIDP and the government's local content programmes from 1961 to 1995, which all focused on supporting Completely Knocked-Down (CKD) production in South Africa. "It was never intended to be a policy that encompasses all autos."

Barnes says the accommodation of SKD assembly in South Africa should "never have happened".

He points out that a substantial amount of automotive policy sits outside of the APDP. "For example, National Treasury decides how to tax the automotive market. In South Africa, we have a very weird regime that over-taxes at the bottom of the market, charges maximum rates in the middle, and then doesn't increase taxes any further for vehicles at the top-end of the market. It's an absurd tax structure that damages volumes in core market segments and is almost 'anti-poor."

POLICY MATTERS

Addressing the trend of SKD assembly plants being set up in South Africa, Barnes is adamant. "If it were up to me, I would say, no thanks! It's CKD production that adds value and employment to the economy, whereas there's minimal investment and very few jobs created in setting up an SKD plant."

Barnes says we have formidable, world-class CKD production plants in South Africa and it makes no sense to welcome this type of "manufacturing" into the market.

In fact, they pose a number of threats: firstly, they can outcompete CKD plants by limiting their exposure to local duties; secondly, they potentially reduce domestic sales of locally manufactured CKD vehicles and thirdly, they add no employment opportunities or contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product.

REDUCED DUTIES

Barnes explains that parts imported to build a CKD vehicle are taxed at 20% when they enter the country. "The thousands of parts on a Bill of Material are imported with a single harmonisation code at a straight 20% duty. This saves time and streamlines the process."

In contrast, SKD parts are imported piecemeal and components like engines, gearboxes and transmissions are brought in duty-free, while others, like air filters come in at just 10%. Barnes says, according to his calculations, SKD assemblers are bringing their own components in and paying, on average, around 8% duty.

DOMESTIC SALES

While South Africa's seven CKD manufacturers exported nearly 70% of the units they produced last year, the 180-200,000 units sold domestically cannot be given up lightly.

Barnes explains that scale and volume of production are more of a factor for monocoque vehicles, which rely on the 'exoskeleton' of the vehicle's *continued on page two*

Finding causes for failed R195m rural macadamia project

THE Portfolio Committee on Agriculture met with the stakeholders involved in the multimillion-rand Ncera Macadamia Farming project in the Eastern Cape, to discuss what led to the collapse of the business and the possibility of reviving it.

On 28 January, the chairperson of the committee, Dina Pule said they received briefings from those involved in the once-promising project – the private business partners, the traditional authority and members of the community – that closed operations almost two years ago.

While none of the parties wanted to take full responsibility for the failure of the business, the presenters blamed the collapse on cashflow problems (late payment of committed funding by government), market collapse, Covid-19 and vandalism of infrastructure.

However, committee members were not entirely convinced with some of the reasons provided and challenged the stakeholders on reports that the business had already started showing signs of collapse during the Covid pandemic. For example, the vandalism that occurred during the pandemic took place during labour unrest following the non-payment of salaries, demonstrating that the business was already struggling.

Ncera Macadamia Farming was a partnership of private business, the community, the traditional authority as landowners and the government, which pumped in a total of R195 million through various funding agencies and departments.

Pule said it was disappointing to see the failure of such a project, which had the potential to lift many people from the nine villages under the Imidushane yaseLwandle Traditional Authority out of poverty.

“The government pumped money into the project because of the community. It is painful to see a father who had a job and was able to take care of his family now back in poverty because of the failure of this project. The collapse of Ncera is a huge setback for economic development and job creation in the province,” she said.

The committee also raised a concern about the business’s failure to produce financial reports and wants accountability for the loss of such a huge investment.

The committee was due to receive briefings from the MECs for Agriculture, Rural Development and Agrarian Reform, Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and the national departments of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.

The Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency has taken over the project and plans to revive the business.

Auto policy: CKD is the ‘treasure chest’

continued on page one

welded panels for structural integrity. SUVs like the Corolla Cross and the Polo are monocoques.

In contrast, ladder-chassis vehicles rely on two long, heavy steel rails held together by cross-members for structural strength, and the body is bolted on top. The Hilux and Ranger are examples of ladder-chassis construction.

Monocoque production requires more investment and therefore a need to produce higher volumes. “To make economic sense, a plant needs to produce a minimum of 25,000 units per plant for ladder-chassis models, and about 60,000 units per plant for monocoque vehicles, depending on the model,” Barnes says.

JOBS AND VALUE

Illustrating how SKD production is no substitute for CKD production, Barnes quotes some round figures.

“If the CKD producers employ 30,000 people and we estimate that for every one assembly job there are two supplier jobs (at a rate of 40% local content), our total employment adds up to 90,000. In an SKD plant, assembly is very basic, requiring far fewer employees – estimate 1,000 in comparison.

“Setting up a basic assembly plant could cost about R40 million. The most complex part of the work is testing. Whereas a CKD plant costs billions in investment. The VW plant at Kariega is probably worth around R25 billion.

“If our SKD plants replace the CKD plants, you’re looking at 1,000 jobs instead of 90,000 and a R40 million investment instead of R25 billion. It makes no sense to me.”

CHERY BUYS NISSAN

On 23 January, Nissan announced that it had sold its land, buildings and associated assets of the Nissan facilities, including its nearby stamping plant at Rosslyn to Chery SA and expected the sale, subject to regulatory approvals to go through in mid-2026.

Nissan said the agreement will see the majority of associated Nissan employees offered employment by Chery SA on substantially similar terms and conditions.

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Parks Tau, welcomed the ‘investment’ two days later.

The DTIC said the deal also coincides with its ongoing engagements with the industry to revamp the automotive policy and support measures.

“The South African automotive sector remains a key anchor industry for manufacturing and job creation. This acquisition by Chery SA is subject to regulatory approvals; after which details on the investment will be shared with the public,” the DTIC said.

Although he has no inside knowledge of the deal, Barnes says he hopes the government “sticks to its guns”.

“I’m hoping we attract Chinese CKD production in South Africa. The Chinese are going to be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their Japanese, American, German, and French counterparts, so we want to have the best chance of us being successful. We need a mix of Chinese and Indian OEMs here, definitely. But it shouldn’t be at the expense of existing OEMs, it should be in addition to and complement what we already have here,” Barnes says.

FEATURES

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Provincial govt invests R19.5m in irrigation schemes

EASTERN Cape Agriculture MEC Nonceba Kontsiwe has launched a R19.5 million provincial irrigation schemes revival programme aimed at strengthening food security and driving agricultural economic growth.

The programme will support vegetable, grain and fodder production, as well as the provision of equipment and machinery, covering a total of 1 528 hectares of land across the province.

The investment forms part of commitments outlined in the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture's 2025/26 policy speech to revive irrigation schemes as a catalyst for agricultural development.

In its efforts to curb food insecurity, the MEC said the department has prioritised the revitalisation of irrigation schemes during the seventh term of government to position agriculture as a key economic growth frontier.

She said the revival programme is set to improve agricultural productivity, enhance food security, provide reliable income for landowners participating in irrigation schemes,

stimulate local economies and boost livelihoods in rural communities.

"This revitalisation programme will ensure food security, strengthen farmer support and strengthen partnerships between government, private sector and communities," Kontsiwe said.

Of the total investment, the Amathole District will see 613 hectares developed at a cost of R5 million, while Chris Hani District will develop 700 hectares through an investment of R6 million. The OR Tambo District will develop 215 hectares, supported by R3.5 million.

Production commercialisation

In addition, the department's implementing agency, the Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency (ECRDA), has been allocated R5 million to support the commercialisation of production.

This includes organising markets, introducing new production technologies, providing technical support and facilitating access to production finance.

The MEC noted that funding criteria is not limited and that districts will be allowed to make their own determinations where infrastructure repairs or other specific needs arise.

According to the National Food and Nutrition Security Survey, the Eastern Cape has the highest proportion of households with access to land at 67%, while only 37% of that land is currently under productive use.

Kontsiwe said the revitalisation of irrigation schemes presents a significant opportunity to unlock this potential and expand productive land use across the province.

"Agriculture is a major employer of semi-skilled workers, and investment in this sector can greatly contribute to reducing unemployment and food insecurity. Irrigation schemes are seen as a vehicle that can significantly contribute to an increase in agricultural productivity in the province," she said.

She highlighted the Zanyokhwe Irrigation Scheme, which spans six villages and covers 635 hectares, with 412 hectares under irrigation. The scheme supports 87 landowners organised into seven primary co-operatives and one secondary co-operative.

The launch was held on 27 January at the Zanyokhwe Irrigation Scheme in Middledrift, and included the introduction of the newly appointed board, a potato harvest demonstration and the welcoming of graduate interns placed at the scheme by the department to gain practical farming and business experience.

The MEC also handed over vegetable production inputs, irrigation pipes, fodder production inputs and tractor implements to beneficiaries.

Netherlands partner steps in to help modernise ports, logistics

ON the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Transnet signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with Port of Antwerp-Bruges International and the Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center.

In a joint media statement, the parties said the partnership signifies a major milestone in efforts to modernise South Africa's port system, enhance operational efficiency, and strengthen regional trade competitiveness. It establishes a framework for cooperation in port operational excellence, digitalisation, sustainability, infrastructure planning, and regional corridor development to strengthen South Africa's logistics performance.

The collaboration introduces global best practices, technical training, benchmarking, and advisory support to build long-term institutional capacity within Transnet divisions.

The MoU includes cooperation on hinterland corridor development and global investment programmes, including opportunities linked to the EU Global Gateway initiative, which is an EU strategy to mobilise investments in sustainable infrastructure projects worldwide, with a focus on digital, energy, transport, health, education, and research sectors.

The parties intend to cooperate and collaborate on the following areas:

- Managerial, operational, strategic and governance advisory support

Transnet signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Port of Antwerp-Bruges International (PoABI) and the Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center (APEC).

- Sustainability strategy and policy for energy, ecological, and social responsibility transitions
- Port operations and digitalisation
- Corridor development and foreign investment programmes
- Training, and strengthening of human and institutional capacities

"This partnership comes at a critical time as we accelerate the modernisation of our ports and strengthen South Africa's position in regional and global trade. Through this collaboration, we will leverage global best practices in order to strengthen our ports' strategic position as gateways for regional and international trade. Our Reinvent for Growth Strategy seeks to modernise, expand and optimise our ports through strategic investments and partnerships," said Transnet group chief executive, Michelle Phillips.

Kristof Waterschoot, managing director of the Port of Antwerp-Bruges International and the Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center (PoABI/APEC) said: "A special moment for PoABI/APEC to celebrate this very special occasion of the MoU with Transnet, hereby rekindling our relationship which started some decades ago. In a new and evolved port landscape we will collaborate on trending topics like energy transition and de-carbonisation whilst still embracing the classic topics like operational efficiency and port logistics. Thanks to Transnet for granting us this opportunity to deepen our relationship and count on us as your partner for port optimisation and team capacitation."

Jacques Vandermeiren, CEO of the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, said: "This MOU marks an exciting new chapter as we renew our partnership with Transnet, one built on trust, shared vision, and an ambition for progress. Together, we are committed to building capacity and sharing expertise in the port sector, with a strong focus on the energy transition and sustainability. By joining forces, we create new opportunities for growth, innovation, and sustainable development."

The parties said they have agreed to establish a Joint Monitoring Committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

New members take up positions at regional water authority

THE state-owned entity responsible for providing bulk water and sanitation services in the Eastern Cape, Amatola Water, recently welcomed newly appointed board following their formal appointment in December 2025 by the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Pemmy Majodina.

Welcoming the new board, the minister underscored clear expectations around oversight, institutional stability, and alignment with national priorities for sustainable water and sanitation services.

Majodina emphasised the critical role the board will play in steering Amatola Water through the complexities of water service delivery, ensuring accountable leadership and effective governance. “Our commitment is to provide sound oversight and strategic direction that will translate into reliable, quality water services for communities across the province,” she stated.

The new Amathole Water board

The onboarding session was also attended by key stakeholders, notably the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Zolile Williams, whose attendance underscored the importance of intergovernmental partnerships in addressing water challenges at provincial and local government levels. The event fostered open dialogue among the shareholder, executive authorities, and board members, establishing a strong foundation for collaborative, strategic leadership, according to the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)

The newly constituted board brings together distinguished professionals with a wealth of experience across public administration, engineering, finance, legal advisory, and infrastructure delivery – all critical areas for advancing Amatola Water’s mandate.

At the helm is Dr Gaster Sharpley, chairperson, a seasoned public administration expert and former HOD , Human settlements, bringing strategic leadership and governance acumen. Supporting him as deputy chairperson is Litha Geza, a leader in organisational development, change management, and HR with extensive public sector experience.

The board also includes:

- Nomfundo Douw-Jack, expert in transformation leadership and corporate services
- Noxolo P. Abraham, governance and financial oversight specialist with deep legislative experience
- Simnikiwe J. Xawuka, civil engineer and water infrastructure authority
- Mxolisi Sibam, finance, risk management, and governance executive
- Thuthuka S. Songelwa,project and construction management professional with legal expertise
- Bhekuyise H. Makedama, municipal engineering and infrastructure strategist
- Nondumiso P. Ngonyama, legal counsel and risk advisory expert
- Trevor I. Balzer veteran water sector strategist and advisor
- Sinovuyo Ngumbela, quantity surveying and project management specialist

Together, this board embodies a robust mix of technical, governance, and strategic skills that will drive Amatola Water’s mission to deliver reliable and quality water and sanitation services to communities across the region, the DWS said.

Incentive boosts Hankey co-operative’s vegetable production

A FORMER informal family project has become one of the Sarah Baartman district’s most promising agribusiness success stories, according to the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC).

Established in 2015 in Hankey, Ukuvuka Ekuseni Agricultural Primary Co-operative, founded by Tommy Thys, farms vegetables on 10,72 hectares in a region dominated by citrus farming. The co-operative produces cabbage, pumpkin, butternut, beetroot, and cauliflower, making it one of only four vegetable producers in the area.

The co-operative now harvests every two to three months, producing 30,000 - 50,000 cabbages, 5,000 cauliflower, 5,000 broccoli, pumpkin and butternut across three hectares each, as well as Beetroot and carrots on half a hectare each. The produce is sold at the Markman Market in Gqeberha.

During peak harvest seasons, they employ 14 - 18 casual workers, providing vital short-term jobs in the community. The farm also keeps 14 pigs and 10 cattle, further diversifying income streams.

“For me this co-operative is about securing a future for my children. I told them there are no jobs waiting in South Africa. We must build something that will carry them long after I’m gone,” says Thys.

His wife Joyce and children Liana, Victoria and Romano now jointly run operations, building generational wealth through the land they manage together.

Thys says the turning point for the co-operative came when they received a R385,000 incentive from ECDC’s Imvaba Co-operatives Fund, following a referral from a Department of Agriculture official who admired the family’s work ethic.

“Before the financial incentive, we struggled to hire tractor implements at up to R250 per hour, often for several days at a time. The grant enabled Thys to purchase implements and upgrade irrigation systems. These changes have dramatically reduced operational costs and boosted production.

“The workload is so much lighter now. Imvaba came at the right time. I’m very grateful,” Thys says.

ECDC acting chief executive officer Lulama Mbobo-Vava says the Corporation uses the Imvaba Co-operatives Fund to support the sustainability of primary co-operatives in the Eastern Cape.

“For example, in the 2024/25 financial year, the ECDC disbursed R17,58 million to 57 co-operatives and enterprising individuals that are part of co-operatives through the ECDC-administered Imvaba Co-operatives Fund.

“The Imvaba Co-operative Fund specifically fosters entrepreneurial development, encourages self-employment, and contributes to poverty alleviation, while enhancing the role of co-operatives in the provincial economy.

Supported sectors include agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing (timber, textiles, chemicals, automotive, metal processing), retail, services, creative industries (arts and crafts), tourism, the green economy (biofuels and renewable energy), business process outsourcing (telecoms), ICT, film production, textiles, and the oceans economy,” says Mbobo-Vava.

With ‘A-grade’ vegetables that already meet the standards of major retailers such as Spar, Shoprite and Woolworths, the co-operative is positioned for large-scale commercial supply. The only barrier is the lack of a packhouse required for packaging and dispatching produce according to retail specifications.

“The demand is there; the quality is there. All we need now is a packhouse to unlock those opportunities,” Thys explains.

But their impact extends beyond economics. Thys regularly donates produce to the local soup kitchen, Hankey Secondary School, and bereaved families in need.

Looking ahead, the family hopes to acquire additional land, construct a fully-equipped packhouse, expand employment, and supply national retailers consistently. Thys also intends to partner with local agricultural schools to offer practical on-farm training.

“Young people want to farm,” he says. “You cannot learn farming in a classroom. We just need to open the doors for the next generation,” he says.

New appointee eyes growth in AI-driven inspection platform

ENTERPRISE-grade Software as a Service (SaaS) platform, Krank has appointed John O'Sullivan as its new head of sales for Asia-Pacific (APAC) and South Africa, bringing decades of global experience across technology-led marketplaces, inspections, and asset-intensive industries, including mining, construction, and automotive.

O'Sullivan previously served as managing director, APAC and Middle East at Iron Planet and later as division director, global asset management at Macquarie Group. He has experience in leading three international auction and valuation companies across Australia, Europe, and Dubai and serves on numerous boards, making him a strategic addition to the Krank team.

"APAC and South Africa demand experience and credibility. John brings both in abundance, along with a deep understanding of how asset condition, timing, and market access drive value," said Mark Turner, CEO of Krank. "John understands how inspection quality, timing, and market access directly affect outcomes, particularly in regions where equipment is worked hard and decisions carry real financial consequence. He also brings immediate credibility. John can engage confidently with boards, operators, and financiers because he has been accountable at that level himself."

A PROVEN TRACK RECORD

Based in Queensland, Australia, O'Sullivan has a strong track record in positioning businesses for growth and strategic value. In his previous roles, he has led initiatives that strengthened market positioning and delivered measurable results, underscoring his belief that "driving growth comes down to understanding the market, spotting opportunities early, and making decisions that create lasting impact."

He sees Krank's AI-driven inspection platform Inspeq as a key differentiator. "AI is everywhere, but very few companies are combining it with inspections for mining, construction, and other asset-intensive industries. That's where Krank's Inspeq stands out," he shares. "Being able to offer actionable insights alongside inspections is what sets us apart."

DRIVING REGIONAL GROWTH

O'Sullivan will lead Krank's expansion across Australia, Southeast Asia, and South Africa, focusing on solutions that integrate inspections, asset intelligence, and controlled sales. "Our goal is to provide a complete solution across sectors, from mining to construction, and to do it in a way that creates real, measurable value," he said.

This appointment aligns with Krank's growth ambitions. Turner adds: "John brings the experience, judgement, and industry respect required to form the right partnerships, move at the right pace, and create something durable across APAC and South Africa. Our goal is to establish Krank as a trusted operating layer for inspections, asset intelligence, and controlled sales.

Delivering automation to make IT simplicity a reality

OPINION | IT departments are under pressure to manage rapidly evolving workloads, supporting traditional applications, like VMs and databases, alongside modern demands such as AI, containers, and edge computing. Rising challenges from AI mandates, unpredictable costs, sustainability priorities, and virtualisation disruptions are reshaping how organisations develop these workload strategies, driving the need for smarter resource use and flexibility, says Marc Layne, sales director, Dell Technologies South Africa.

These challenges are only amplified by the growing rate of change, with 88% of C-level executives, both globally and in South Africa, expecting to experience more change in 2025 than they did in 2024.

One thing is clear across discussions with our South African customers: there is an urgent need for dynamic and adaptable strategies to manage this complex landscape, all while seeking freedom from vendor lock-in and management consistency. These requirements have sparked a shift toward disaggregated infrastructure, which delivers levels of flexibility and scalability that legacy systems can't match. Dell Technologies is at the forefront of this evolution with our industry-leading hardware, but now we are taking it a step further with software-driven automation built to accelerate deployments and simplify infrastructure operations. We are excited to announce Dell Automation Platform, a singular software orchestration platform that combines the strength of Dell's industry-leading infrastructure with advanced automation to deliver simplified IT operations. The platform's intuitive experience centralises delivery, management, and orchestration of solutions across AI, private cloud, and edge environments such as Dell NativeEdge and Dell Private Cloud. Dell Automation Platform is the culmination of decades of proven innovation across Dell and our unmatched ecosystem of partnerships, delivering solutions tailored to clients' needs.

By integrating core capabilities like secure zero-touch onboarding, centralised inventory management, Dell AIOps, and automation up and down the stack, the platform streamlines workflows and accelerates time-to-innovation. Deployed on-premises or through SaaS, Dell Automation Platform offers a curated catalogue of outcomes, solutions, and offers, validated by Dell experts and supported by a global supply chain that enables consistent deployments and seamless update processes. These capabilities extend from Day-0 to Day-2, including full lifecycle management, native ITSM integration, and multi-system storage management capabilities such as an automated Dell PowerStore OS update experience.

The initial key offers enabled by Dell Automation Platform include:

PRIVATE CLOUD WITHOUT LOCK-IN

Dell Private Cloud is evolving to meet the needs of modern IT environments. Earlier this year, we launched support for VMware, and now we're excited to expand with support for Red Hat, with Nutanix support coming soon. Built on disaggregated infrastructure, Dell Private Cloud delivers the simplicity of automated lifecycle management while offering the flexibility to independently scale compute and storage. This approach improves resource utilisation, reduces over-provisioning, and lowers costs, all while empowering organisations to adapt to changing needs.

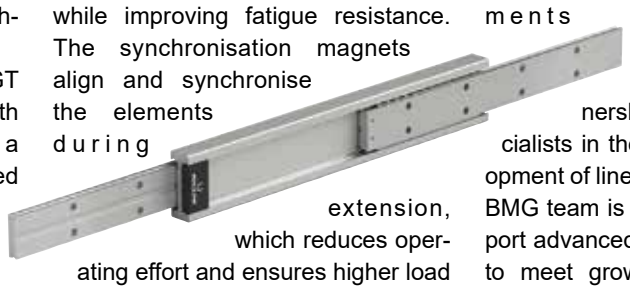
Synchronised movement enhances performance of telescopic rail system

BMG has introduced the new Rollon HGT-MG telescopic rail with synchronisation magnets for smoother, more controlled, higher-capacity extension.

Rollon has expanded its HGT heavy-duty telescopic rail range, with the launch of the new HGT-MG, a design that incorporates a refined ball-cage geometry and internally mounted synchronisation magnets to improve operational efficiency and extend service life. The new series is designed to reduce the force required to open the rail, aligning its elements during extension, providing controlled, repeatable movement under load.

The HGT design uses a robust double T-shaped intermediate element paired with two corresponding sliders to withstand challenging operating conditions. The addition of synchronisation magnets in the HGT-MG series provides enhanced smoothness, controllability and durability, without altering the established mounting footprint of the HGT range.

"Rollon's HGT heavy-duty telescopic rail range ensures simplified motion, while improving fatigue resistance. The synchronisation magnets align and synchronise the elements during extension, which reduces operating effort and ensures higher load capacity," explains Leon Koekemoer, BMG's linearway and ball screw product specialist. "This new design also helps extend service life because the system experiences less mechanical impact during repetitive cycles."



The HGT series forms part of Rollon's fully extending, heavy-duty telescopic rail range, which is used extensively in construction and machinery applications, as well as in automotive and rail-vehicle systems. All rails and sliders in the series are manufactured in steel and finished with zinc electroplating and thick-film passivation to meet REACH and RoHS requirements. A stainless-steel version is also available for environments requiring additional corrosion resistance.

Through BMG's partnership with Rollon – specialists in the production and development of linear motion systems – the BMG team is able to supply and support advanced linear motion systems, to meet growing demand in Africa for precision in industrial automation, ensuring sustainable production.

BMG's Rollon portfolio includes linear guides, telescopic rails, actuators and multi-axis systems, as well as ball screws and rotational units – engineered to function reliably in heavy-duty industrial operations. These robust components withstand high loads, continuous use and exposure to harsh environments, making them suitable for sectors including automotive assembly, electronics manufacturing, packaging and materials handling.

Polymer bearings contribute to heavy lifting success

DOCK-levelling and materials handling specialist REV Designs & Installations has grown into one of South Africa's most innovative engineering firms in the lifting-equipment sector.

Based in Springs, the company designs and manufactures a wide range of loading, docking and lifting equipment including some of the largest scissor lifts produced in the country. According to the company, a key factor in the success of the business is the careful design and specification of materials and components which amplifies its equipment's' performance and results in trouble-free operation for its customers.

A good example is the design and construction of three massive scissor lifts destined for the timber industry several years ago. Each capable of handling up to 40 tonnes per lift, the lifts were engineered for harsh, high dust sawmilling environments where the equipment is pushed hard and uptime is critical. It was during this period that founder and chief designer Ricardo Viljoen made a key engineering decision to move away from greased steel bearings and fully adopt igus high-performance polymer bearings across the key pivot points of the new lifts.

According to Viljoen, the switch has exceeded expectations. The original scissor lifts have now been in operation for around five years, and the service history is striking. The machines were designed to be serviced quarterly with an annual inspection recommended. In practice REV has only been called back twice in five years for a light annual service and again for a general inspection. Since that time not a single bush or bearing has failed.

This small move away from conventional design has saved the customer many hours and costs that would otherwise have been associated with servicing and maintaining greased steel bearings as well as the unavoidable failure of these bearings that would have previously allowed for several failures per lift per year.

"The igus polymer bearings have operated without lubrication nor adjustment and without any sign of wear severe enough to warrant replacement. The scissor lifts themselves have also run trouble-free, reinforcing the success of the bearing choice and overall design. The

company says its customer's own maintenance teams have confirmed that there has "never been a problem with the bushes, never a problem with the scissor lift nor anything with the scissor lifts.

"This kind of long-term reliability in a demanding environment has had a direct impact on our design philosophy. Today, all new scissor lifts as well as numerous other loading and lifting solutions produced by the company are standardised on igus polymer plain bearings and bushings," says Viljoen.

He explains that bearings need to be exceptionally strong to handle the massive forces generated during heavy lifting. At the same time, they have to resist the ingress of debris that quickly seizes or damages metal-on-metal bearings. The sawmilling sector is a good case in point. It is notoriously harsh on mechanical systems with fine sawdust, moisture and abrasive debris constantly entering mechanical clearances destroying traditional bearings and requiring frequent greasing. Cleaning joints to remove grease and buildup also releases contaminants into the environment and if left ungreased the heavy loads and repetitive motion quickly accelerate wear.

Working closely with Juan-Eric Davidtz, igus's polymer bearing specialist, REV is able to identify the correct iglide materials for each pivot point on scissor lift pivot, caster or other moving applications. For example, the timber scissor lift incorporates 33 bushings, and each one operates under slightly different conditions including load, movement or weight. Matching specific polymer formulations is critical to each requirement and ensures optimal performance throughout the system.

The long lifespan of the bearings with no measurable degradation after five years of hard service in this tough application has changed the way REV Designs engineers its equipment. Viljoen says the polymer bearings have become "integral to nearly all new designs" due to their ruggedness, predictable performance and dramatically reduced maintenance requirements.

Where earlier designs relied on steel or stainless-steel bearings that demanded daily greasing and constant monitoring, the igus polymer solution has enabled REV to offer equipment with significantly longer service intervals and minimal maintenance. This has been particularly valuable in tough industries where stopping production to repair or lubricate lifting machinery can be extremely costly.

By partnering with igus and applying the correct polymer materials at every pivot point, the company says it has created some of the most reliable heavy-duty scissor lifts in South Africa capable of operating in the harshest industrial environments.

Torque-limiting solutions protect drive equipment against overload

BMG'S power transmission division has extended its range of Rexnord products to include Rexnord's Autogard torque limiters. These devices have been designed to protect machinery, enhance reliability and minimise downtime in demanding industrial environments.

"In local industries – including wineries and breweries, mining, cement, sugar milling and bulk materials handling - where conveyor blockages, crusher jams and process surges are common, torque limiters play an important role in protecting high-value equipment," says Carlo Beukes, business unit manager, BMG's power transmission division, BMG. "Rexnord Autogard torque limiters efficiently protect drive equipment against overload, thus preventing damage and minimising downtime in industries that depend on continuous operation. Unlike conventional mechanical shear pins or friction devices, the Autogard system offers optimum performance and repeatable accuracy, with minimal maintenance requirements.

"BMG technical experts are able to specify torque-limiting solutions matched precisely to heavy-load operating conditions, through sizing, alignment and commissioning assistance. The team also provides a dependable back-up support service via the company's extensive branch network," he says.

"Rexnord Autogard torque limiters protect drive systems by mechanically disconnecting the drive when the preset torque limit is reached. Once the overload condition clears, the unit resets automatically, allowing operation to resume without manual intervention. These robust devices prevent mechanical damage to motors, gearboxes and couplings and reduce unplanned downtime in continuous process environments."

The Autogard range covers torque capacities from approximately 3 Nm to 45,000 Nm, allowing selection for light, medium and heavy-duty applications, including conveyors, mixers, crushers and process machinery.

These torque limiters comprise a mechanism that provides precise, repeatable disengagement and consistent performance over many cycles. Units can be installed in standard shaft and coupling configurations and are suitable for both new assemblies and retrofit projects.

BMG's Regal Rexnord power transmission components also include industrial gear units, low-speed backstops, idlers, couplings, bearings and shaft locking assemblies. Other important components are Falk True Hold low-speed backstops and Rexnord Omega and Viva elastomeric couplings.

As the official Rexnord partner in southern Africa, BMG offers comprehensive technical support - from product selection and sizing, to installation, commissioning and after-sales service.

This partnership combines Rexnord's advanced products with BMG's technical expertise and a wide branch network, ensuring that customers in diverse industries benefit from reliable system protection, optimised uptime and lower total cost of ownership.

Proper maintenance keeps power tools in top form

WHETHER trimming, pruning, tilling, or spraying, outdoor power tools work hard, and they deserve regular care to keep performing safely and efficiently, according to Husqvarna. From chainsaws and brushcutters to pole saws, tillers, and battery sprayers, consistent maintenance isn't just good practice - it's essential for tool longevity, operator safety, and cost-effective performance.

"Servicing is often overlooked until something goes wrong," says Wynand Lombaard, Africa service manager at Husqvarna South Africa. "But maintenance isn't just about keeping tools running – it's about keeping users safe too. A neglected chain or loose harness can turn a routine task into a serious hazard."

Fortunately, with a few easy checks and scheduled care, users can avoid breakdowns and extend the life of their equipment.

Lombaard shares a simple routine to adopt to ensure a well-serviced machine, particularly if it is used daily:

Routine check: Before each use, inspect fuel, oil, and battery levels. Clean off debris from cooling fins, filters, and air intakes to prevent overheating. Check chain brakes, guards, and switches for proper function, and tighten any loose connections or harnesses.

Weekly maintenance: Take time to inspect starter cords and mechanisms, clean spark plugs (on petrol models), and check air filters for dust buildup. Examine vibration-damping elements for cracks or wear that could affect handling.

Monthly tune-ups: Sharpen cutting components like chains, blades, or replace trimmer lines. Inspect drive belts and sprockets for wear, and clean mufflers or spark arrestors to prevent carbon buildup in petrol tools.

Annual and seasonal care: Before long-term storage or seasonal use, drain fuel tanks and replace spark plugs, oil, and filters. Recharge and store batteries in a cool, dry place. If equipment shows signs of wear or performance issues, schedule a professional service.

Many routine maintenance tasks, like cleaning filters, checking spark plugs, sharpening blades, and inspecting cables, can be done at home on Husqvarna equipment, using the company's model-specific service kits and manuals. These kits include genuine parts and step-by-step instructions tailored to each tool, making it a practical option for hands-on users.

Rethinking power, control, and infrastructure resilience in Africa

OPINION | ACROSS much of the African continent, power and control infrastructure does not fail because it is poorly designed. It fails because it is too often designed for ideal conditions that simply do not exist, says Nhlanhla Zondo, sales director, Power Process Systems (PPS).

Engineers and operators are required to work within an environment shaped by infrastructure vandalism, material theft, harsh weather conditions, constrained capital budgets, unreliable grids, and persistent skills shortages. In this context, traditional assumptions about asset replacement, digitalisation, and imported solutions are increasingly being challenged.

What is emerging instead is a more pragmatic engineering philosophy, one that prioritises resilience, adaptability and longevity over novelty. At the centre of this shift is a growing recognition that Africa's infrastructure challenge is not merely about building more, but about making existing systems smarter, tougher and more maintainable.

When replacement is not an option

In many mature industrial and municipal environments, full system replacement is neither financially viable nor operationally prudent. Capital expenditure is tightly constrained, while downtime carries significant social, safety and economic consequences. As a result, refurbishment and life-extension strategies are becoming essential engineering tools rather than budget compromises.

Targeted refurbishment of existing assets such as mini-substations, distribution kiosks, and control panels allows utilities and industrial operators to address safety, reliability, and security risks without the disruption and cost associated with complete rebuilds. By upgrading enclosures, renewing critical internal components, and integrating modern monitoring capabilities, infrastructure can be stabilised and modernised incrementally.

This approach reflects a broader shift in thinking: performance gains do not always require wholesale replacement, but rather intelligent intervention based on a deep understanding of operating context.

DESIGNING FOR VANDALISM, THEFT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS

One of the defining characteristics of African infrastructure environments is that physical security is not optional. Theft of copper components, vandalism of kiosks, and unauthorised access to live electrical equipment remain among the leading causes of outages, safety incidents, and revenue loss.

In response, physical hardening has become a core design principle rather than an afterthought. Structural reinforcement, intelligent access control, and the removal of scrap value from components are increasingly embedded into enclosure and distribution system design. This is not merely about protecting assets, but about safeguarding communities and ensuring service continuity.

Material selection plays a crucial role in this context. Moving beyond conventional mild steel, engineers are increasingly adopting corrosion-resistant and high-strength materials better suited to humidity, dust, temperature extremes, and coastal conditions. Although such materials may carry a higher upfront cost, they significantly reduce lifecycle expenditure by extending service life and lowering maintenance demands.

LOCAL MANUFACTURING AS A RESILIENCE STRATEGY

Global supply chain volatility has reinforced an insight long understood by African engineers: local manufacturing is not just an economic advantage, but a reliability strategy. Local production enables tighter control over quality, faster response times, and the ability to customise solutions for highly specific operating conditions.

Water mist fire suppression provides precision protection for high-value assets

PROTECTING critical assets in demanding environments with traditional sprinklers and gaseous systems is not always the best option. Water mist fire suppression has emerged as a highly effective alternative that minimises water damage, supports life safety and offers strong environmental performance, particularly in specialised and high-risk applications.

"Clients increasingly want fire protection that is both technically robust and sensitive to their operations," says ASP Fire CEO Michael van Niekerk. "Water mist systems give us another proven tool in the engineering toolbox, especially where conventional sprinklers, foam or gas systems present unacceptable trade-offs in terms of water damage, downtime or enclosure integrity."

SMALLER DROPLETS

Water mist systems are water-based fire suppression systems that discharge very fine water droplets through specially engineered nozzles at low, intermediate or high pressures. According to NFPA 750, the Standard on Water Mist Fire Protection Systems, water mist is defined as a spray in which 99% of the water volume is in droplets smaller than 1 000 microns in diameter at the minimum operating pressure.

By comparison, conventional sprinkler droplets are significantly larger. The much smaller droplet size dramatically increases the total surface area of water exposed to heat.

As the droplets absorb heat and rapidly evaporate to steam, the system cools the flames and hot gases, displaces oxygen immediately around the fire and reduces radiant heat transfer.

The result is fast fire control or extinguishment, with a fraction of the water flow of traditional sprinkler systems, which in turn reduces collateral water damage, clean-up time, and business interruption.

"From an engineering perspective, water mist allows us to design tightly focused suppression solutions," explains Van Niekerk. "You get the cooling and oxygen displacement benefits of water, but with far lower volumes and a more controlled impact on equipment, structures and contents."

APPLICATIONS

Water mist is not a universal replacement for all types of fire protection. It is most effective in well-defined, often enclosed or semi-enclosed hazards where the spray pattern can be engineered and validated for the specific fire risks.

International research and field experience highlight several core strengths. First, machinery spaces and engine rooms. Water mist is widely used in machinery spaces on ships, turbine enclosures, and generator rooms to tackle Class A (solids) and Class B (flammable liquids) fires.

The technology provides rapid knock-down with less thermal shock and corrosion risk than deluge systems, while avoiding the need for gas-tight enclosures required by many clean-agent systems.

Second, data centres, control rooms, and IT facilities. Fine droplets cool hot surfaces, inhibit fire spread and limit damage to equipment. Although water mist is not intended to penetrate sealed cabinets, it is effective at stopping fires from spreading beyond the point of origin, and reinstatement is often quicker than after a conventional sprinkler discharge.

Third, heritage buildings, libraries, archives and museums.

Pop-up boxes bring modular power and data solutions to modern furniture

LEGRAND has introduced the latest Incara pop-up boxes to the southern African market, providing an integrated, modular, aesthetically-pleasing solution for power and data connections within furniture.

This new range meets a growing need locally for reliable, unobtrusive connection points in modern spaces, particularly where flexible working patterns require accessible power and charging.

The Incara range is designed to blend discreetly into modern interiors, while giving users immediate access to sockets and fast-charging interfaces. The compact design allows installation in spaces where depth is limited, including above drawers, offering greater flexibility for commercial and residential environments.

An important feature of this system is that it can be adapted to the existing furniture configuration and installed close to the user to carry high and low current functions.

These pop-up units are available in four- and eight-module formats, supporting a wide selection of Arteor functions for power and data. This configuration enables specifiers to tailor solutions to the requirements of offices, meeting rooms, hospitality facilities and home-working environments.

The mechanism opens smoothly via a wide activation button and a damped cover, which improves ease of use, while helping to prevent accidental damage. An IP44 rating applies when the cover is closed, enhancing protection in the event of accidental spillage of liquids.

The modern finishes - brushed Aluminium, Aluminium, white and black - are designed to coordinate with contemporary furniture surfaces. Impressive features intended to integrate with working surfaces include the sleek, low-profile appearance when closed and the flush aluminium lid. The body of the unit is designed to sit neatly beneath a counter, reducing impact on drawers or internal clearances.

The functional range includes power sockets and data provisions, as well as support for portable device charging. Arteor USB Type-C power delivery chargers are a key optional function within the system, to assist users in maintaining productivity throughout the day.

Legrand is supplying the latest 45 W USB-C Power Delivery charging modules to the local market, in place of the older 20 W version. These modules automatically negotiate the appropriate charging profile with the connected device to optimise charging performance for laptops, tablets and smartphones. Advanced technology ensures these pop-up units are suitable for high-demand devices used in professional, commercial and educational environments.

Legrand products conform with stringent local and international quality and safety specifications. The range features innovative designs to meet exact user requirements.

Integrated HVAC solutions enhance operator safety and compliance in cabs

WITH over 40 years of specialised expertise, Booyco Engineering leads in climate control solutions for South Africa's mining and quarrying sectors - industries where airborne pollutants and extreme thermal conditions pose serious occupational health hazards.

Recognised as a key contributor to the South African economy, the mining sector faces mounting pressure to ensure safer healthier working environments - especially in the face of stringent legislation. The Mine Health and Safety Act (MHSA), Act 29 of 1996, requires that every mine must be designed, constructed and equipped to facilitate safe and healthy operations.

More recently, industry efforts have shifted from reactive to proactive occupational hazard management - with growing emphasis on the monitoring, control and reporting of worker exposure to environmental risks.

"Mobile machinery operators are often confined to enclosed cabs for extended periods in high risk areas where dust, heat and toxic gases such as CO2 can quickly compromise their health," Brenton Spies, managing director of Booyco Engineering, explains. "Addressing this challenge has been the cornerstone of our business for decades and today we can offer a fully integrated HVAC solution that aligns with international standards, including ISO 23875, to ensure that operators remain protected at all times."

ISO 23875 specifically governs air quality in enclosed cabs, with key performance criteria including the provision of fresh air into the cab, positive pressurisation to prevent ingress of contaminated air and effective control and management of CO2 levels.

While these requirements may be straightforward in on-road vehicles, achieving compliance in harsh mining and quarrying environments is far more complex. High levels of airborne particulates, diesel fumes and fluctuating ambient temperatures all add layers of technical difficulty when it comes to implementing effective climate control systems.

Booyco Engineering's HVAC systems are engineered to meet these exacting standards. The company's bespoke solutions incorporate Sy-Klone filtration technology to introduce clean filtered air into the system. This air is cooled and distributed into the cab while maintaining the required internal pressure and limiting CO2 buildup.

"We don't just build air conditioners – we engineer environmental control systems that protect the health of machine operators and provide mines with actionable data," Spies says. "Our integrated system continuously monitors cab air pressure, dust concentrations, CO2 levels and particulate contaminants, ensuring a controlled internal atmosphere at all times."

Crucially, this real-time data can be downloaded for analysis, enabling mines to track operator exposure levels, demonstrate compliance with health and safety standards and improve overall risk management. This also supports broader ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) initiatives which are becoming increasingly important for both investors and regulatory authorities.

Booyco Engineering's approach is not only preventative but also performance-driven – enhancing machine uptime, reducing maintenance downtime due to clogged filters or overheating and ultimately improving productivity across mine and quarry sites.

"By aligning our engineering capability with global health and safety benchmarks, we are empowering mines and quarries to be both compliant and competitive. It is about going beyond compliance – it is about safeguarding people and performance," Spies concludes.

High efficiency air filtration in HVAC systems

FIBERTEX Nonwovens – global innovators in advanced nonwovens and high-performance solutions – has developed a fully synthetic nonwoven air filter media to enhance energy efficiency and operational sustainability in heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

Maintaining optimal indoor air quality within HVAC systems, which are critical for controlling temperature, humidity and air purity, presents a significant energy challenge. Given that HVAC systems contribute substantially to a building's energy consumption, a key factor in efficient operation is minimising the energy required for supply air fans to overcome filter airflow resistance.

Traditional filter media often exacerbates this resistance, driving up energy costs. Furthermore, growing environmental concerns necessitate the elimination of potentially harmful substances, like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from building materials. Therefore, there is a critical need for advanced filtration solutions – produced using sustainable, PFAS-free technologies – that deliver superior filtration efficiency while minimising the energy burden on HVAC systems.

The Fibertex E-Flow filter media forms part of the company's strategic focus on sustainability, operational efficiency and the development of innovative products that contribute to cleaner environments and more energy-efficient systems.

The E-Flow filter media effectively addresses the urgent need for eco-friendly, high-efficiency air filter media, with performance standards comparable with – and, in certain metrics, outperforming - traditional high-efficiency filter media.

Conventional air filter media, given its nonwoven structure, is susceptible to a phenomenon known as pore bridging. As the media is loaded with particulate contaminants, this

pore bridging leads to increased resistance to airflow, resulting in a demand for greater energy to maintain airflow.

Fibertex E-Flow filter media has been designed to counter these issues through its advanced nonwoven structure, which ensures lower pressure drop and consistent airflow over prolonged usage.

According to Fibertex, extensive laboratory testing shows that E-Flow filter media delivers approximately 67% lower energy consumption when compared with traditional alternatives of similar size and efficiency.

E-Flow filter media is manufactured to stringent quality and environmental specifications at Fibertex nonwoven and nanotechnology production facilities, utilising the company's Pleatex design, developed to enhance mechanical filtration. By incorporating nanofibres into its pleatable nonwoven structure, the E-Flow filter media ensures high performance, without relying on the delicate and potentially hazardous fibres used in conventional filter media.

Traditional high-efficiency filter media can degrade in energy efficiency over time due to moisture and particulate contaminants, thus increasing airflow resistance. In contrast, E-Flow filter media provides stable filtration performance throughout its design lifetime, achieving Eurovent 4/21's highest energy efficiency rating of A+. This translates to substantial reductions in both energy costs and carbon footprint.

Fibertex E-Flow filter media offers up to 50% longer filter service life – even with a reduced amount of filter media, compared with conventional glass fibre media, the company says. These results are achievable due to the advanced Pleatex nonwoven structure, which has a high dust-holding capacity. By minimising the rate of pressure increase as dust accumulates, E-Flow filter media reduces the energy required for maintaining airflow.

Fibertex Nonwovens invests substantially in research and development to deliver air filtration solutions that address critical global challenges. Through advanced products, like the E-Flow filter media, Fibertex Nonwovens continues to set benchmarks for high performance and environmental responsibility.

Range of coolant distribution units launched to serve rising thermal demands

MOTIVAIR by Schneider Electric, a leading innovator in liquid cooling technology for digital infrastructure, has introduced two new Coolant Distribution Units (CDUs), engineered to meet the rising thermal demands of HPC and AI workloads. These new models are the company's first purpose-built CDUs for optimised installation in utility corridors, offering data centre operators enhanced flexibility, performance, and integration across a wider range of deployments.

The new CDUs, the MCDU-45 and MCDU-55, are available globally, with production ramping up early this year. Both provide wider cooling capacities, features, and design conditions, allowing operators to leverage a wider range of chilled water temperatures to optimise deployment and operations. With the addition of these new CDUs to its end-to-end liquid cooling portfolio, Motivair by Schneider Electric offers additional floor mounted CDUs and in-rack units, tailored to enable enhanced cooling strategies for hyperscale, AI, colocation, edge, and retrofit environments.

KEY BENEFITS

The new CDUs are designed to reflect the evolution of liquid cooling and match changing infrastructure deployments for the AI era. Customers are increasingly deploying CDUs in areas outside of the white space.

Having a full range of CDU deployment options allows operators to tailor cooling strategies to their specific AI infrastructure, data centre design, and workload demands to achieve optimal thermal performance and operational resilience as compute densities continue to rise. The key benefits of the MCDU-45 and MCDU-55 include:

- Space optimisation and flexibility. With new and existing CDU options, operators have greater flexibility to choose the right model that meets their specific deployment goals.
- Energy savings. CDUs feature wider operating ranges, enabling heat rejection systems to unlock energy efficiency and improve PUE.
- Simplified maintenance and accessibility. Diverse placement of CDUs improves flexibility

The year ahead: Opportunity and challenge for supply chains

AS 2026 gets underway, it's clear that supply chain uncertainty is not going anywhere this year. But while there has been no respite from geopolitical tensions and shifting trade dynamics, the supply chain conversation is changing tone, says leading Southern African supply chain industry body Sapics. After years defined by disruption, firefighting and crisis response, the focus is shifting from survival to structure, and from reaction to strategy. For African and South African supply chains in particular, this transition brings both challenges and opportunities, Sapics asserts.

International research, including the United States-based Association for Supply Chain Management's (ASCM's) 2026 supply chain trends report, points to a supply chain future shaped by intelligent, resilient and data-driven operations. Sapics notes that these themes take on a distinct meaning on the African continent, where supply chains must operate in environments marked by infrastructure constraints, energy instability, geopolitical complexity and deep socio-economic responsibility.

MOVING FROM A STATE OF "PERMACRISIS"

Over the past five years, supply chain leaders have been operating in what many describe as a state of "permacrisis". Pandemic aftershocks, geopolitical conflict, climate events, port congestion, skills shortages and cost volatility forced organisations into constant defensive mode. Sapics says that in 2026, that has changed. "Rather than reacting to each new shock, leading organisations are redesigning their supply chains to absorb disruption, adapt dynamically and create long-term value. This is where South African and African supply chain managers, which have long had to build resilience into daily operations, may have a headstart."

AI MOVES FROM EXPERIMENT TO ESSENTIAL

Artificial intelligence has been cited as a top supply chain trend for some time. This year, it is at the centre of supply chain optimisation, moving from pilot projects to core infrastructure.

For African supply chains, AI-driven forecasting, demand sensing and scenario modelling are gamechangers that can help mitigate long-standing challenges such as unreliable data, volatile demand and constrained capacity, Sapics explains. "By synthesising real-time information from across the supply chain - including weather, ports, energy availability and market signals – AI enables faster, better-informed decisions.

"Crucially, this is not about replacing people. It is about augmenting human judgement in environments where complexity is high and margins for error are low."

But the increasing focus on technology like AI does mean that we will see a supply chain workforce evolution in 2026, according to Sapics.

WORKFORCE EVOLUTION

"Automation and AI are taking over repetitive, transactional tasks, freeing professionals to focus on strategy, analysis and decision-making. Supply chain managers must invest in new skills, including data literacy, systems thinking, scenario planning and cross-functional leadership.

"In Africa, this transformation has a powerful social dimension. Building future-ready supply chains means developing local talent, creating sustainable jobs and ensuring that technological advancement supports inclusive growth."

GEOPOLITICS, REGIONALISATION AND "ANYWHERE-BUT-CHINA"

With changing global trade patterns, the familiar "China + 1" supply chain strategy is evolving into a broader "Anywhere-but-China" approach, as organisations diversify sourcing and production to reduce risk. This is driving increased regionalisation and supply chain rewiring.

Sapics says that this trend presents a strategic opportunity for Africa. "As global companies seek alternative manufacturing and sourcing locations, African countries that invest in infrastructure, skills and policy certainty can position themselves as viable regional hubs. South Africa, with its established logistics capability and access to regional markets, has a critical role to play.

"At the same time, supply chain managers must navigate increasing trade complexity, localisation requirements and geopolitical risk. Success will depend on network design, supplier diversification and strong regional partnerships."

CLIMATE, CIRCULARITY AND COST PRECISION

Climate risk and circularity are moving rapidly up the supply chain agenda. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) expectations are increasingly influencing investment decisions, customer relationships and regulatory frameworks.

Sapics notes that for African supply chains, climate resilience is not abstract. "Extreme weather events, water scarcity and energy instability already affect operations. In 2026, organisations that integrate sustainability into network design, sourcing and logistics will be better positioned to manage both risk and reputation. At the same time, cost optimisation is evolving. Rather than blunt cost-cutting, leaders are adopting precision strategies that balance efficiency, resilience and sustainability."

A defining year for African supply chains

With 2026 already shaping up to be a defining year for supply chains globally and particularly for Africa and South Africa, Sapics emphasises the importance of education and knowledge sharing for everyone involved in supply chain management at any level. "In today's complex and rapidly evolving supply chain landscape, all supply chain roles must be filled by people with the requisite knowledge, skills and qualifications," the organisation states.

Since its foundation in 1966, Sapics has worked to elevate, educate and empower supply chain professionals in South Africa and across the continent. This is done via membership, events, education courses, workshops through Authorised Education Providers and others, and the annual Sapics Conference, which is the leading event in Africa for the supply chain profession. This year's conference takes place in Cape Town from 19 to 22 July 2026 and is a milestone gathering as it coincides with Sapics 60th anniversary.

Truck-mounted cranes cut costs on the move

AS industries search for ways to reduce operating costs, lower emissions and streamline project timelines, truck-mounted cranes stand out as one of the most efficient lifting solutions available today.

Sonia Pretorius national sales manager for 600SA, a division of CFAO Equipment, says that unlike traditional crawler or tower cranes, truck-mounted units combine transport and lifting into a single unit, offering unmatched versatility and tangible financial and environmental benefits.

"Traditional lifting solutions often require separate vehicles to transport equipment to job sites, whereas truck-mounted cranes eliminate this need entirely. This is because transport and lifting form part of one unit, reducing fleet size and simplifying project logistics."

Another advantage of truck-mounted cranes is their legal on-road mobility, meaning they do not require special transport permits, allowing them to move easily between multiple job sites in a single day.

"This streamlined approach immediately reduces the cost, time and the emissions associated with multiple trips or dedicated transport trucks," notes Pretorius.

Fuel usage is one of the most notable operational differences between truck-mounted cranes and bulkier equipment. Typically, truck-mounted cranes will use about 10 litres per hour while mobile cranes will use between 20 and 40 litres per hour.

"Obviously, there are a few factors that influence fuel consumption: the size of the crane and the size and weight of the load. That said, truck-mounted cranes use less fuel compared to mobile cranes because of their design. The bigger the crane, the further the oil needs to travel to power the cylinders. This means more power is needed, which also results in higher CO2 emissions," adds Pretorius.

Pretorius says because the hydraulic system on a truck-mounted crane is integrated with the truck's engine, these cranes naturally operate cleaner and more efficiently. "Shorter setup times also mean less idling, less run-time and lower total emissions per lift."

From a pricing perspective, truck-mounted cranes come at a more 'reasonable' purchase price than crawler or tower cranes. They also have reduced maintenance requirements as there are no tracks, no heavy counterweight systems and minimal rigging.

Additionally, they are cheaper to transport as they transport themselves and are quicker to set up as they can be operational in under five minutes, which translates into less paid downtime.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Pretorius says crawler and tower cranes need high capital investment, which is often prohibitive for small to mid-sized contractors. "They also require specialised transport to get them to site and setting them up requires large teams (sometimes taking up between one and five hours, depending on size), extensive rigging and significant site preparation. Also, larger hydraulic systems and tracks increase maintenance needs and fuel usage.

"Savings depend on project type, but truck-mounted cranes consistently reduce costs in transport and logistics, labour, setup and breakdown time, fuel and maintenance," she notes.

For many small- to mid-sized contractors, these efficiencies translate to between15% and 30% savings on lifting-related logistics and setup costs when compared to using larger crawler cranes or mobile cranes. In addition, avoiding specialised heavy equipment rentals can significantly reduce strain on capital.

While truck-mounted cranes have lower lifting capacities and vertical reach, meaning they are not suitable for high-rise construction, most everyday lifting applications fall perfectly within their performance range.

They are versatile across industries, especially those that require frequent moving, short setup times and moderate lifting capacity. Some of these include HVAC and mechanical installations, steel erection and light construction, telecommunications and signage, landscaping and tree removal, municipal and utility operations, mining, agriculture and logistics support.

Their flexibility allows companies to complete more jobs with fewer machines, improving efficiency across entire operations.

Truck fleet expands with European brand

COMMODITY Logistix Managers Africa (CLM Africa), a bespoke mining equipment supplier, bulk commodities broker and logistics company, is expanding its side tipper fleet with ten new DAF trucks from Babcock, the DAF Trucks' distributor in southern Africa.

According to Babcock, the vibrant, black, youth-owned, fully-integrated commodity trading, agriculture, mining, logistics and advisory house, made a switch to DAF in 2024.

The company initially bought five DAF XF480 Smart Spec models. The buying decision was largely influenced by the existing relationship between CLM Africa and Babcock's Alfred Hoyer.

"DAF is a premium European brand with a strong heritage. Upon learning about the history of DAF Trucks and how it is highly regarded in its native European market, as well as the traction it has gained locally in the past 15 years under the stewardship of Babcock, the client was highly impressed and signed on the dotted line," says Hoyer.

A key competitive edge for Babcock was the ability to offer a total solution to the customer. Financed by Babcock Finance Services, the deal also included a maintenance contract, on-site servicing, driver training and Babcock's telematics system, Executrax, as standard.

"We were able to offer a total transport solution to the customer through a range of professional services that enabled CLM Africa to select the right vehicle, secure financing and maintain the fleet at peak efficiency," says Hoyer. "By bundling everything together in one place, Babcock made the entire truck purchasing process effortless for the client."

DAF Trucks has clinched the prestigious International Truck of the Year award on several occasions in the past few years. In 2022, the truck producer set a new industry record by winning both the International Truck of the Year and the Truck Innovation Award in the same year, highlighting DAF's competitive nature in the global trucking landscape.

The first five trucks have already proven their mettle in terms of performance, efficiency and driver comfort – key parameters that have played a huge part in securing a new deal for a further ten new DAF XF480 units.

The new deal, which also includes ten new trailers, will be financed through Babcock Financial Services and an independent financial services provider.

Commenting on what makes the XF 480 Smart Spec tick, Hoyer says that at the heart of the vehicle's fuel efficiency is the new Paccar MX-13 Euro engine that produces significantly more power and torque (up to 2 500 Nm on the 480 hp version) than the previous model. This increase is due to a new common rail engine design with injection pressures of up to 2,500 bar (20% greater than before) and a compression ratio of 18,5:1.

Further along the driveline is the ZF 12-speed Traxon direct-drive gearbox with a 100 Nm higher input torque rating and a 7,5% lower single-reduction differential ratio. The combination of these new driveline elements has been proven to contribute to significant fuel savings in long-haul interlink applications in South Africa.

"The truck's interior and ergonomics improve the driver's experience with intuitive features that do not overwhelm them or make driving a truck complicated. An innovative instrument cluster and display with driver coaching improves the driver's understanding of how to achieve better vehicle performance and fuel efficiency. Drivers who are new to the DAF product can therefore adapt quickly with a bit of driver training and therefore achieve results rapidly," concludes Hoyer.

Migration to 2D codes transforming packaging

THE move to GS1 2D codes is one of the most ambitious transformations in modern packaging, according to Leibinger, a global specialist in coding & marking systems.

Aljona Barberio, marketing manager, Leibinger says that for many producers, it's a necessary step toward transparency, automation, and digital readiness. But, he warns that, between the vision and real-world implementation, there are practical hurdles that can slow progress or create unexpected costs.

Offering advice on how to avoid hidden pitfalls, Barberio says understanding these challenges early makes all the difference — and helps turn a compliance project into a success story.

TECHNICAL RISKS: TINY CODES, BIG IMPACT

2D codes are dense, data-rich, and highly detailed — which means printing precision is critical. Small deviations in droplet size, ink adhesion, or substrate reflectivity can cause scanner errors. Materials such as glossy film or transparent plastic require excellent contrast and stability to maintain readability.

Variable data adds complexity: as batch or expiry details change, so does the code pattern. Without consistent calibration, print quality can deteriorate. Barberio says that inline code verification is therefore essential — ensuring that every single code printed on the line is readable before it leaves the factory. "With Leibinger printers manufacturers can maintain code integrity at real production speeds, minimising rework and waste," he says.

ORGANISATIONAL RISKS: WHEN DATA DOESN'T FLOW

Technical performance alone isn't enough, says Barberio. Many projects struggle because the organisation behind the data isn't clearly defined. Who owns the GS1 master data? How do IT, production, and quality departments coordinate updates?

If systems like ERP, MES, and printers aren't fully synchronised, the digital workflow breaks down. The result: wrong data on the right code — or the right data printed too late.

"A successful migration requires clear process ownership and data management, as well as fully reliable hardware," says Barberio.

EXTERNAL FACTORS: THE WIDER ECOSYSTEM

Even if everything works internally, external conditions may lag behind. Not all retailers' POS scanners are 2D-ready yet, so during the transition phase, dual coding — printing both a 1D barcode and a 2D symbol — will remain necessary in many cases, he says.

At the same time, Human Readable Codes (HRC) continue to play an important role. Some key information such as expiry date must still be printed in plain text to ensure accessibility and visual verification by the end user. HRCs provide a vital backup when scanners fail, and they help operators and inspectors quickly confirm product data without additional tools.

Barberio highlights another aspect, that of user acceptance. "For operators, retailers, and consumers alike, 2D codes represent a new way of interacting with packaging. Workflows and habits will evolve gradually as understanding and confidence grow. This is not the end of the journey — it's only the beginning, and the industry will continue to learn and adapt with every step.

"Regulatory and data-protection requirements add another layer of complexity. The more information a code carries, the more critical strong data governance becomes. And while investment in new hardware and software is significant, it's a future-proof investment — preventing costly recalls, manual rework, and process delays further down the line, says Barberio.

Barberio concludes that the 2D migration is not a sprint — it's a strategic evolution that requires planning, collaboration, and reliable partners. Those who act early will enjoy higher efficiency, improved compliance, and a clear competitive edge.

German telehandler targets African agricultural sector

WACKER Neuson South Africa is bringing the German telehandler brand, Weidemann to sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural sector.

"Our introduction of Weidemann to the South and sub-Saharan African market reinforces our long-term growth vision for Africa and marks a defining moment in our expansion journey, by bringing Weidemann's renowned telehandler technology into our sales channel and opening new avenues for innovation and efficiency throughout Africa's farmlands," says Stefan le Roux managing director of Wacker Neuson South Africa. "We identified significant potential in Africa's agricultural market for telehandlers even before the pandemic. Weidemann, another premium German brand within the Wacker Neuson Group, enables us to deliver yet another exceptional product to our valued customers. Providing end-users with the highest quality equipment, backed by outstanding aftersales support, is both our vision and our mission, and this launch is a natural evolution of that commitment."

The Weidemann T7042 marks a milestone as the first telehandler model to debut on African soil. Compact, robust and engineered for high performance, it embodies the agility, versatility and multi-functionality that define the brand.

Compact magnetic-inductive flow meter with IO-Link

THE global market for magnetic-inductive flow meters is stable, with sales of over five million devices. “With this statistic in mind, Kobold has combined two of its proven components, the successful type MIK magnetic-inductive flow meter and the popular `U-PACE ‘ compact electronics, creating an exciting new compact flow instrument at the best price for our customers”, says Kobold’s development manager, Manfred Heil. “Our market analyses have shown a significant demand for this.”

HOW IT WORKS

The flow meter functions according to the magnetic-inductive measurement principle. According to Faraday’s law of induction, a voltage is induced in a conductor moving in a magnetic field. The electrically conductive measuring medium corresponds here to the moving conductor. The voltage caused by the fluid is proportional to the flow rate and thus a measure of the volumetric flow. The induced voltage is fed to the electronics via two electrodes. The volume flow rate is calculated and output based on the known inner diameter.

DEVELOPMENT

Where previously separate electronic modules were necessary for flow display and dosing, all these and more tasks are now taken over by the new compact electronics U-PACE. This latest development, a chemically resistant flow meter and flow monitor in one device, caters to a broad range of applications. The MIK is suitable for a wide range of applications, including flow control, flow measurement, filling, and quantity recording in the food, chemical, and paper industries, as well as for aggressive fluids in the construction industry. The measuring ranges are generously designed from 0.01 to 700 litres per minute and are suitable for all requirements.

The advantages of the proven MIK series are evident: reliable flow measurement of electrically conductive liquids without moving parts. Hence, wear and mechanical failure are excluded. The maintenance-free device is space-saving, measures bidirectionally, and accommodates both low and high flow rates. Short inlet and outlet sections allow the MIK to be installed even in confined spaces.

The MIK is insensitive to variations in viscosity, density, temperature, or pressure and generates only a minimal pressure drop. Due to various material combinations, the instruments are resistant to corrosive acids and alkalis. The MIK is suitable for water and water-like fluids, specifically for ground, cooling, and wastewater in various compositions. Special attention is given to the electrodes, which, by technical necessity, have direct contact with the fluid. Stainless steel electrodes are suitable for most fluids. For exceptional challenges, there are electrodes made of Hastelloy or Tantalum, which are resistant to almost all aggressive substances.

IO-LINK

The unit can be connected to existing automation systems via IO-Link. “IO-Link is a standardised and real-time communication standard for connecting sensors and actuators to an intelligent automation system,” explained Heil. “Our motivation has always been customer-driven needs. That’s why we’re integrating the proven IO-Link technology into an increasing number of measuring devices. The global trend is reflected in our day-to-day business. Last year, we sold our ten-thousandth measuring device with IO-Link.”

COMPACT ELECTRONICS

Thanks to the established compact electronics U-PACE, the new MIK features two individually configurable outputs that are intuitively operable and can be set by the customer, for example, as pulse, frequency, alarm, or analogue outputs.

“U-PACE is the logical evolution of existing electronic concepts: integrating a variety of different measuring devices under a uniform, intuitively operable electronics system to leverage synergies. The acronym Universal Precision and Control Electronics reflects the desires and expectations of today’s market, ultimately what the customer wants and can expect from us,” Heil added. “Engineers and technicians on-site neither have the inclination nor the time to read loads of manuals for each new product. So, the premise in our development was: electronics for everything, easily operable.”

This enables devices to be easily integrated into different processes, providing real added value with their short response times. The colour multi-display can be digitally rotated in 90° increments, eliminating the need for a different model when changing locations, and the display remains independent of the connections’ position. The desired dosing process can be started and stopped both on-site at the display and via an external control input. The desired quantity is set using the buttons.

THE FOUNDATION FOR EVERY MEASUREMENT PROJECT

The flexibility of the device family is evident in user guidance and functionality. All settings can be conveniently adjusted via four optical keys on the display on-site. Functions such as temperature measurement, partial quantity display, or maximum flow rate can be assigned to these hotkeys, eliminating the need for constant navigation through multiple control levels in the menu. This can also be safely done with most gloves. The multi-line display provides a better overview, displaying the corresponding unit or other additional information alongside the measured value. The display’s multicolour capability further enhances this clarity: for instance, the colour changes when a specific flow volume is reached. Thus, the user can see from a distance when a certain quantity is dosed or a limit has been exceeded.

“Customers can look forward to the next product innovation that Kobold brings to the market,” Heil continued, while also highlighting the integrated temperature measurement and the high measuring range span of up to 50:1 of the MIK. “The challenge is to integrate pinpoint knowledge from the fields of measurement and process engineering at the right time and manufacture the new devices in line with market requirements.”

Updated surface drill rig

EPIROC’S Surface division launched a new generation surface drill rig offering increased fuel efficiency and high availability in December. According to senior product manager Masanori Kogushi, the PowerROC T45 is a welcome addition to the PowerROC family. “We are eager to get this rig out to our customers around the world. The PowerROC T45 MKII is the perfect choice for construction sites and aggregate, cement and limestone quarries.”

The new generation PowerROC T45 is equipped with an Epiroc developed control system, which helps decrease fuel consumption. This is due to the auto engine speed control, which enables automatic optimisation of the engine RPM for all operations.

“The new generation PowerROC T45 offers up to 40 % lower fuel burn compared to the previous generation,” says Kogushi.

To assist with easy operation, the PowerROC T45 MKII includes an intuitive 12 -inch display that presents all the necessary data, monitors running status and offers the operator additional assistance. Two one-touch lever controls make rod changing and drilling both simple and quick. The system is easy to learn and use.

The new surface drill rig has many similarities to the PowerROC T35 MKII, which was released last year. Like the other rigs in the PowerROC family, the PowerROC T45 MKII features a modular and straightforward design, which keeps servicing simple.

“Compared to the PowerROC T35 MKII, the PowerROC T45 MKII surface drill rig offers a big hole range, which is something many of our customers want. This PowerROC T45 MKII launch is therefore a natural step forward in our offering within the PowerROC family”, says Kogushi.

The PowerROC T45 MKII has been field-tested with positive results during the last couple of months. “We have fine-tuned the rig for maximum performance and have achieved all our major targets”, says Kogushi.

The new generation PowerROC T45 comes with two different engine alternatives – Tier 3/ Stage IIIA and Tier 4 Final/Stage 5.

An integrated approach to conveyor belt monitoring is no longer optional

CONVEYOR systems are the backbone of material handling in mines, quarries and bulk processing plants. They move massive volumes of material across long distances and through complex circuits, linking each stage of production. When they operate reliably, they underpin productivity. When they falter, the knock-on effects can halt operations and drive up costs within minutes. Issues such as spillage, carryback, misalignment, premature belt wear and safety incidents can escalate quickly and recovering from them is seldom straightforward.

Against this backdrop, monitoring technologies have developed rapidly over the past decade. What began with basic mechanical indicators has now evolved into sophisticated real-time digital systems capable of providing continuous insight into the performance of the entire conveyor line. This evolution reflects a broader trend across heavy industry with the shift from reactive maintenance to condition-based and predictive strategies. For plant operators, the opportunity lies not simply in collecting more data but in taking an integrated approach that combines mechanical excellence, instrumentation and actionable intelligence. And, critically, the success of that integration is best achieved when supported by a reputable conveyor systems OEM such as Tru-Trac.

EVOLUTION

Today's systems integrate multiple data streams across the conveyor line. Belt tracking status, idler vibration, chute and skirt performance, scraper effectiveness, bearing temperatures, power draw, belt thickness and cover wear and load profiles can all be measured and correlated. By piecing these signals together, operators can see how small deviations trigger cascading problems – for example belt wander leads to edge damage which worsens misalignment which in turn drives spillage, cleanup costs and eventual belt replacement.

Equally important is the trend toward placing monitoring closer to the source of the problem. With the arrival of edge computing, low power devices can now process vibration, thermal and acoustic data directly on idler frames or pulley housings. Instead of waiting for anomalies to surface hours later in the plant's historical system early signs of wear or friction are flagged immediately, allowing for targeted intervention before a catastrophic failure occurs.

The final, and perhaps most transformative, stage of evolution has been the shift from raw data to actionable intelligence. Monitoring platforms increasingly translate sensor values into clear prioritised recommendations such as which idlers to replace, where to re-tension a scraper or when to inspect a chute liner. Integrating these outputs with a plant's computerised maintenance management system (CMMS) ensures that the right work orders are raised, the correct spares are allocated, and technicians arrive on site equipped for the task. This closes the loop from detection to intervention.

MONITORING AND ECHANICAL EXCELLENCE

Despite the sophistication of today's monitoring technology, the fundamentals of conveyor performance remain mechanical. Belts must track true, loading must be controlled, chutes must flow smoothly and material must be cleaned effectively. If these fundamentals are neglected, even the best monitoring system cannot prevent failures.

This is where a holistic approach comes into play. Hardware such as Tru-Trac belt trackers, primary and secondary scrapers, skirting systems, impact beds and slider cradles continue to form the foundation of reliable conveyor operation. Monitoring enhances these investments by confirming their performance, providing measurable proof of reduced carryback or improved alignment and highlighting when adjustments are required. The fusion of mechanical excellence with digital oversight delivers results that neither approach could achieve alone.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SAFETY

Monitoring also addresses the increasing emphasis on sustainability and safety across mining and materials handling. Conveyor belts consume substantial amounts of energy and misalignment, or poor cleaning only increases friction and power draw. By keeping belts centred and return strands clean, operators can achieve measurable energy savings. Extending belt life also reduces the frequency of costly replacements, lowering both material usage and waste.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INTEGRATION

The economic benefits of integrated monitoring are clear. Unplanned downtime on a production-critical conveyor can cost tens of thousands of rand per hour. By identifying issues early, plants can act before small problems escalate into major disruptions. Replacing an idler identified as running hot costs little compared to repairing belt edges or recovering from a derailment.

Energy savings are another driver. A belt that is properly aligned and free from excess material runs with lower resistance, drawing less power and reducing stress on motors and drives. Over time, these savings add up to significant reductions in operating costs. Planned maintenance also becomes more efficient. With accurate wear data, spares can be ordered in advance and repairs scheduled during planned shutdowns eliminating the need for costly emergency interventions.

"An integrated approach to monitoring is no longer optional," Shaun Blumberg, COO of Tru-Trac says.

Concrete walling system offers versatile storage bins for bulk materials

ROCLA'S engineering department was recently approached by a client in the mining sector for a product suggestion to create 3m high storage bins for material with a bulk density of 2,700 kg/m3. This material would also be required to be stored at a 25° angle of repose, above the bin wall height, extending up to almost 6.2m above floor level in the centre of the bins. Accordingly, each three-sided bin would need to store approximately 525 m3 and 1,400 tons of product. In total, 14 bins, with a total capacity of approximately 7,350 m3 and 19,600 tons would be required. Rocla suggested its Alfabloc walling system.

Rocla sales engineer, Justin Kretzmar said: "Rocla's Alfabloc range, which includes 1.2 m, 2.4 m and 3 m high blocks was immediately proposed as the best fit. However, a challenge remained in that the standard 3 m high blocks have a maximum rated bulk density for stored material of only 1,600 kg/m3 in free-standing orientation with 25° repose loading. Therefore, a solution had to be found to increase this by almost 70%. This was quite a challenge, but not insurmountable," he says.

"Our engineering team determined that anchoring the blocks with chemical anchors to an engineered surface-bed and re-designing and increasing the steel reinforcement in the blocks, thereby creating a heavy-duty range of Alfablocs, was the successful solution to achieve the required loading," said Kretzmar.

The client's lead time posed an additional challenge. Rocla had never supplied such a large project and had existing production capacity suited to projects requiring less than 100 blocks as opposed to this project's requirement of nearly 500 new heavy-duty units, as well as many 90° corner blocks. Rocla's inhouse engineering and fabrication teams "stepped up to the plate". They not only built new moulds, but also redesigned them to speed up stripping, preparation and production to ensure that all moulds could be cycled daily.

Twelve months after the product request was lodged, the block and layout designs finalized with the client and the project red tape navigated; Rocla received an official order to supply and deliver 496 x heavy-duty 3 m Alfablocs, amounting to 1400 tons of concrete and 500 truckloads, including all the anchorage components, which included 1,984 resin capsules, threaded rod studs, washers and nuts.

Production started almost immediately with the existing moulds and increased incrementally as additional moulds were completed and introduced into the system. The last blocks were delivered almost a year after receipt of the order, in March 2024.

ALFABLOC APPLICATIONS

Rocla says Alfabloc is a very structurally efficient and versatile concept in design. In the majority of working conditions, the Alfabloc units are minimally stressed and provide a robust retaining structure. With granular materials, which generally provide the most onerous loadings, the Alfabloc unit has additional stability generated by the frictional force down the face of the wall.

Experience has shown the Alfabloc units can withstand significant misuse by mechanical plant used to move retained material. However, as with all relatively thin-walled concrete structure, they will suffer damage with persistent and negligent striking by mechanical plant.

Kretzmar says, "The foundation for the Alfabloc system is usually the new or existing concrete surface bed onto which stored materials will be contained. The loads imposed by the Alfabloc units are usually no more than the wheel loads imposed by the mechanical plant utilised to move the stored material. However, depending on the nature of the stored material, the units can either be placed onto the concrete surface bed or bolted into place."

To assist in the spread of load horizontally, the units have a concrete tongue-and-groove joint that runs the full length of overlap between adjacent blocks. Additionally, as and when required for organic stored materials, painted or galvanised plate can be installed across these joints to completely seal them.

Fitting of a top channel not only assists to join the blocks, but also provides a platform onto which any number of other security devices can be attached, such as steel arms for razor wire or CCTV installations. For security installations the cavity inside the Alfabloc offers a perfect secure location for the placement of cables.

"We have supplied our Alfabloc walling system to customers in the plastics, chemicals and packaging materials, construction, and mining sectors."