

South African Plastics Pact's members are leading investment in SA's transition towards a circular economy

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Since the launch of the South African Plastics Pact, members have committed to invest ~R3.5bn in circular downstream investments, including collection, sorting and recycling, and ~R268.3m in upstream interventions, which includes packaging manufacturing and resin production. These investments contribute towards a higher collection and recycling capacity of ~86,000 tonnes.



SA Plastics Pact members with DFFE Minister Barbara Creecy at the annual c-suite breakfast



“The South African Plastics Pact represents one of the ways that we would like to work to accelerate progress towards addressing plastic pollution. International agreements are typically a long & challenging road. The INC-3 in Nairobi was unable to reach consensus. CEOs committing and leading their organisations can make meaningful impact.”

These were the sentiments of the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) Barbara Creecy, at the recent annual South African (SA) Plastics Pact C-Suite breakfast, hosted at the Taj Hotel in Cape Town. The breakfast forms part the Pact's annual member conference, at which members reflect on progress made towards [their targets](#), as well as plan for actions and activities in the year/s to come.

As part of the 2023 year end conference, the Pact published its [2022 annual report](#). This report follows the previous year's publication of the [2021 annual report](#) and the [2020 baseline report](#) (published in 2021) and reflects on the continued progress of the members through quantitative data analysis and comparative analysis from previous years, as well as through specific member stories and projects.

Highlighted movements towards the 2025 targets, include:

- Members have reduced [problematic and unnecessary plastics items](#) by **1,000 tonnes** compared to 2020 by the end of 2023
- The following items have been fully eliminated from member portfolios: **PVC pallet wrap, plastic stickers on fruit and vegetables, plastic microbeads in cosmetics, plastic stirrers and plastic straws**. The removal of straws and the reduction of plastic picnic cutlery alone amounts to almost **40 million** plastic items, and there has been a year on year reduction in the number of barrier bags used by retailers by **22 million** items.
- **4.47 million of PET bottles and shrink sleeves** were **rendered recyclable** through substitution with alternative shrink sleeve material in 2022.
- A further **17.3 million** will have been shifted to the alternative shrink sleeve by the end of 2023.
- 82% of plastic packaging placed on the market by members was **recyclable in South Africa**
- Recycled content in members' packaging portfolios has increased from 19% (baseline report) **to 24%**, approaching our target of 30%.

These achievements and the actions members are taking towards achieving the targets are encouraging. Sustained effort is required to drive the systemic change needed for the establishment of a circular economy for plastic in South Africa.

Positive progress towards tackling our plastic waste challenge cannot be achieved by any one sector or organisation in isolation. The SA Plastics Pact is therefore in a unique position to drive collaboration between members. The Pact is a pre-competitive, collaborative initiative that works across the value chain, with SA Plastics Pact members sharing learnings to move faster, build momentum and work together to overcome challenges collaboratively and expedite progress towards a circular economy for plastic packaging.

The second hosting of the SA Plastics Pact's now annual c-suite breakfast aimed to build on the positive engagement from the inaugural event in 2022, bringing together DFFE Minister Barbara Creecy, as well as leaders and c-suite executives of some of the most influential brand owners and retailers in South Africa to share their perspectives. The event celebrated the investments that members are making as well as considering how brand owners and retailers are setting themselves up as key actors in the development of a circular economy for plastic packaging.

Since its launch, SA Plastics Pact members have invested ~R268.3m in circular upstream interventions, including packaging manufacturing and resin production, and ~R3.5bn in downstream investments, which includes collection, sorting and recycling. These investments contribute towards a higher collection and recycling capacity of 86,000 tonnes. This demonstrates that the members are committed to this journey, above and beyond legislative requirements.

In light of the global discussions on plastic, including at the recent INC-3 and at the [COP28](#), it is imperative for ongoing dialogue between the private and public sectors in South Africa. The SA Plastics Pact is demonstrating the significant role it is playing in driving this progress from a national perspective.

"It is a real pleasure for Heineken Beverages as a business member of the SA Plastics Pact, to reaffirm the importance of circularity in our value chain through events like the c-suite breakfast with Minister Creecy. We thank her for all her leadership and support on this journey."

"Our Heineken business strategy 'Evergreen' highlights the importance of sustainability and responsibility as integral part of our strategy. Our sustainability strategy 'Brew a better World', has a strong pillar on maximising circularity. We encourage all players in our ecosystem to join the SA Plastics Pact, and let's make the circle bigger! This is very much a collaborative, 'all hands-on deck', initiative," said Eric Leong Son, head of sustainability at Heineken

Saliem Fakir, executive director at the African Climate Foundation, who was the breakfast's Master of Ceremonies, concluded the event.

"The South African Plastics Pact is an example of how facilitated collaboration between key role-players across value chains can drive systemic change in complex arenas."

The 2022 Annual Report is available for [free download](#) from the SA Plastics Pact website. Organisations that are interested in joining the Pact are encouraged to do so and can find out more information [here](#).

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