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TOTAM SEEDS STARS AT THE GLOBAL TOMATO CONGRESS

For this occasion, the Dutch company, a member of the Mitsui Group, also launched a new yellow cherry and an orange mini plum tomato, which attracted great interest from trade professionals.

(The Netherlands, 5th May 2022)

Totam Seeds can look back with great satisfaction on the Global Tomato Congress 2022, the event which brought the world's top tomato experts together in Rotterdam to discuss the future and innovations of this crop.

Totam Seeds, a seed company belonging to the Mitsui Group, "founded by growers for growers", attended the international congress in the dual role of sponsor and exhibitor, presenting various innovations in terms of both the reinforcement of its in-house tomato team and the development of new varieties with characteristics that attract strong demand from the modern consumer.

With regard to the company's internal expansion, the Global Tomato Congress 2022 saw the official presentation of the new Totam Team, which has kept on growing and gaining fresh professional expertise in the last few months. In fact, in January the new Customer Service and Marketing Manager, Seniz Pektas, with lengthy experience in the seed business, joined the organisation. Pieter Vermeulen, also with years in the sector behind him, was another new addition, taking on the role of Product Development Manager from last March.

The new varieties presented on the Totam Seeds stand also attracted a great deal of interest. The message from the Global Tomato Congress was clear: the tomato of the future will be more and more colourful, will multiply its possible consumption opportunities, and will become a fundamental ingredient for adding flavour, freshness and aesthetic appeal to a vast array of dishes. With this in mind, Totam Seeds presented 3 completely new products. The first was SH 9133, a cherry tomato with a bright lemon-yellow colour and a strong, sweet flavour. Alongside were: SH 9074, a bright orange mini plum with exceptional sapidity, and SH9164, another mini plum, that caught the attention for its intense glossy red, sweetness and crunchiness.

"We are very pleased with the feedback received during the 2022 edition of the Global Tomato Congress," commented Seniz Pektas, Customer Service and Marketing Manager of Totam Seeds, "because our discussions with the top trade professionals gave us confirmation that we are on the right path. Since its foundation, our company has always focused its attention on farmers and people who make their living from farming, developing sustainable ideas and varieties throughout the production chain."

Totam Seeds, a Mitsui & Co. company, belongs to the Group's Seeds Business Unit, which comprises several seed production firms: Top Seeds International IL, Totam Seeds NL, ISI Sementi IT, Xiangyan Seeds China and Japan Vegetable Seeds JP. Prominent, one of the largest tomato growers in the Netherlands is also a shareholder in Totam Seeds.

New Holland's DC320 disc mower on centre stage during a busy first stubble alfalfa harvest

As alfalfa crops in Qapqal County and Huocheng County in Ili Region of Xinjiang became ready for harvest, the professional team and efficient equipment of New Holland became ready for action—all with the goal of achieving the highest quality harvest.

The harvest of the first stubble alfalfa is in the early flowering stage of alfalfa growth. In addition, if there is sufficient rain and light at the beginning of the year, and the content of nutrients such as protein and vitamins is rich, it produces the best feed for cattle and sheep fattening. Whether the Timely harvesting and correct technique directly impacts the quality and yield of alfalfa products.

In order to allow local users to fully appreciate the performance of new equipment and better carry out harvesting operations, the New Holland technical support team, together with engineers from the distributor Ili Shinong Technology, coordinated a delivery and in-field setup event for New Holland DC320 disc mower users.

Attendees were provided with thorough technical training, allowing them to understand DC320 disc mower operations and daily maintenance more deeply. This can not only ensure better forage harvesting quality, but also improve operation efficiency and make certain the equipment performs to its full potential.

New Holland DC320 disc mower is a

3.11m, mid-haul DiscCutter™ C model with a spring float system as standard. In order to protect the mower, TopSafe™ technology will effectively protect the cutting system such as the cutter head when the mower encounters obstacles such as rocks.

Herringbone rubber roller – suitable for crops such as alfalfa

Since the beginning of the first stubble alfalfa harvesting, the DC320 disc mower has won the praise of users for its fast operation efficiency, light field operation mode, and good crop harvesting effect.

With the continuous improvement of the mechanized level of alfalfa harvesting in recent years, more and more agricultural machinery and equipment such as balers and mowers have been put into the production process, which has greatly improved the efficiency of alfalfa harvesting, storage and transportation.

As an active promoter of forage and silage mechanization in China, New Holland can not only provide customers with high-quality machinery for mowing, gathering, baling and silage packing, but demonstrates its commitment to customers with its professional dealer network.

New Holland dealers provide every customer with complete and efficient after-sales service, technical training and other support, so users can buy with confidence and have the peace of mind that their New Holland machinery will always add value to their operation.


Automobile

Nigeria's Autochek Acquires CoinAfrique for Francophone Africa Expansion

Autochek and CoinAfrique join forces.

The Lagos, Nigeria-based Autochek, an automotive technology company that seeks to make car ownership more accessible and affordable across Africa, has announced the acquisition of CoinAfrique, a leading platform for classified ads in French-speaking Africa, to accelerate the penetration of its auto financing services in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and other French-speaking African countries.

Founded in 2016 by Matthias Papet and Eric Genetre, with a presence in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and 10 other French-speaking African countries, CoinAfrique has grown to a significant classified marketplace for Francophone Africa, enabling businesses and individuals to seamlessly buy and sell vehicles, electronics, real estate and other goods.

"We are excited about the opportunity to drive the penetration of auto financing across Francophone Africa and to support the wider mission across Africa. We see many opportunities to unlock value for users across all the categories on our platform and to expand into new countries. We are looking forward to leveraging Autochek's market-leading loans product and expertise to deliver more transformative experiences for our users," says Matthias Papet, CEO and co-founder of CoinAfrique.

According to the acquisition announcement, the CoinAfrique app has been downloaded more than 2 million times, with 800,000 monthly active users and 60,000 new ads per month. The website receives more than 1.5 million visits per month.

With 50 per cent of the business transacted on the CoinAfrique platform happening in the automotive category, this acquisition is expected to simplify the process for more French-speaking Africans to access financing and other value-added services for their vehicles.

CoinAfrique's wider classifieds business will continue to operate across the various product categories, deeply integrating Autochek's auto financing product to drive access to credit for automotive purchases.

Autochek will be positioned to leverage CoinAfrique's extensive database across Francophone Africa to facilitate auto financing for consumers and SMEs across this region to purchase their desired vehicles. It will also support further integration of the Pan-African automotive industry to drive shared value for consumers, manufacturers, financial institutions and other stakeholders.

"Matthias and Eric are pioneers of the classifieds model in Africa and they have built an outstanding platform with many significant partnerships with car dealers, fintech platforms and other stakeholders in the Francophone automotive sector. They are joining the Autochek family with many years of business and infrastructure development experience across Europe and Africa and we are looking forward to leveraging their expertise to improve the automotive finance value proposition across the continent," says Etop Ikpe, CEO and co-founder of Autochek.

The CoinAfrique team will join Autochek and will support the mission to make car ownership more accessible and affordable across the continent.

With this acquisition, as well as the recent acquisition of Morocco's KIFAL Auto, Autochek is doubling down on its Francophone focus to replicate the successes achieved so far in the English-speaking West Africa and East Africa region, as local teams are empowered to build for the nuances of their specific markets.

Toyota back on top after positive sales month in June 2022

New passenger vehicle sales in June 2022 reflected a staggering 20,9% increase from the year before with Toyota recording the most sales in the market managing a total of 7 439 units during the month.

Toyota are back on top after misfortune at their Durban factory hampered their supply chain of new vehicles due to flooding and infrastructure damages. The statistics are courtesy of naamsa, South Africa's automotive business council. A total of 176 245 units were sold in the new passenger vehicle market and 63 586 in the light commercial market with Toyota leading the charge once again with a total of 7 439 units followed by the Volkswagen Group which managed 5 672 units in our local market with 10 689 units produced for export.

Suzuki was in the mix too after strong year-opening sales, coming behind Volkswagen with 4 622 sales over the month of June 2022. Hyundai and Ford closed the top five with 2 945 and 2 396 local sales respectfully. Most of these sales contribute to the June 2022 new passenger car market with 29 545 units registered signifying an increase of 5 048 cars, or a gain of 20,6%, compared to the 24 497 new cars sold in June 2021. The car rental industry also supplemented this number with purchases accounting for 11,2% of sales over the course of the month.

Sales for medium and heavy truck segments of the industry reflected a good performance during the month. The former managed a total of 3 518 units, a 1,9% increase from the year before while the latter achieved 10 093 monthly sales, representing a 7,4% increase from June 2021.

Knock-on effects from flooding in KZN, along with the lingering shortage of semi-conductors and supply chain disruptions caused by war in Eastern Europe mean that the light commercial market made up of bakkies and minibuses was down by 7,6% in comparison to the year before.

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GONDWANA INTRODUCES HYBRID CARS TO ITS NAMIBIA2GO FLEET

Namibia2Go presented the first of 12 new hybrid vehicles which combine petrol and electric power to deliver the best possible performance and efficiency in Windhoek this week.

The cars include a generator that automatically charges a battery. Mariental Toyota is Namibia2Go's partner and supplier of the new Hybrid vehicles.

The new rental cars from Namibia2Go will hit the road as soon as they arrive. Namibia2Go has already received numerous enquiries from environmentally conscious self-drivers and interested parties.

At the official launch of the Toyota Cross hybrid vehicles, Gondwana's Financial Director Jaco Visser said that after two difficult years, tourism has to move with the times and should actively engage in the protection of the environment.

"Tourism is one of the most inclusive and sustainable industries that we have. We have to look after our planet to make sure that it is there for generations to come," Visser said.

Test drives in Cape Town have shown that the Toyota Cross 1.8XS CVT HV's average petrol consumption is 4.7l/100 km, a great advantage in times when fuel prices are soaring to dizzying heights. The car is also more environmentally-friendly thanks to lower carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions.

The Toyota Cross 1.8XS Hybrid is off-road capable, economical and comfortable. Furthermore, it is equipped with the latest safety technology, 2×4 drive and good ground clearance.

Corolla Sedan SX Hybrid, RAV4 Cruiser Hybrid and Camry Ascent Sport Hybrid shown

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CONSTRUCTION

Concor at the forefront of "Green" construction

When it comes to care for the environment, there can be few contractors around with the track record of Concor, which has shown its commitment to 'green' construction on literally scores of building, construction and civil engineering projects, some of which have won top industry awards.

"Our excellent track record is not a matter of chance," says Bruce Paul, group environmental manager at Concor. "Care for the environment and a concern for sustainability is ingrained in our company culture. Quite apart from this, we also need to measure up to the high expectations of all our stakeholders."

He adds that clients increasingly have ambitious goals when it comes to sustainability and environmental care and Concor takes cognisance of this. Additionally, the company – like any other contractor –has to comply with the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), which constitutes an entire family of laws, as well as other relevant legislation.

"Basically, any reputable contractor these days will have to show a high level of environmental awareness and have a real commitment to sustainability in order to operate successfully, so the business case for being strong in these areas is overwhelming," he says.

Concor, of course, is a member of the Green Building Council South Africa (GBCSA) and has been responsible for many high-profile green building projects, both in South Africa and across border, which have been recognised under the GBCSA's Green Star certification system.

Examples include the phase 1 refurbishment and expansion of the Menlyn Park Mall in Pretoria, the first retail building in South Africa to achieve Green Star SA status; the Aurecon Century City building in Cape Town, the first building in South Africa to be awarded a 5 Star Green Star SA – Office Design v1 rating; and FNB@Parkside in Windhoek, which ranks as Namibia's first green building.

According to Paul, the Menlyn Park refurbishment – completed several years ago – exemplifies what green building means in practice. "As regards materials, post-consumer recycled reinforced steel was used while the ordinary cement in the concrete was reduced by 30 % through substitution with fly ash," he says. "Also noteworthy was a reduction of potable water consumption of around 30 % compared to what would normally have been expected on a project of this size and type.

"Recycling, of course, is an important principle of the green approach and a high level of recycling was achieved at Menlyn Park with more than 70 % of waste being repurposed."

Further afield, in Qatar, Concor built the Qatar Science & Technology Park, which achieved a LEED Green Building under the Core and Shell Gold award. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) which is the US equivalent of South Africa's Green Star certification system.

Commenting generally on green buildings, Paul says they cost less to run, produce less greenhouse gas emissions, use energy optimally and are easier to insure and hold value longer. "These factors appeal to developers and building owners, and we are seeing more clients insisting on their buildings being green. My own view is that the future of large projects in the construction industry really depends on designers and contractors being knowledgeable about green construction processes."

More recently, Concor completed several phases of the Oxford Park precinct construction with buildings achieving various Green Star certifications; the latest is the recently completed Ikusasa which achieved a 6 Star Green Star certification in terms of the GBCSA Green Star rating.

Green construction principles can, of course, be applied outside the commercial building field and Paul says Concor is particularly proud of the work it has done on wind farms around the country which are generally situated in environmentally sensitive locations. He points to the Roggeveld Wind farm in the Western Cape – which recently entered commercial production – as a particularly fine example of what can be achieved.

"We were responsible for a portion of the civils work, which included turbine bases spread over a construction footprint of 40 ha," he says. "The site is situated on Central Mountain Renosterveld, which is home to unique species such as Brunsvigia josephinae and other red data species. The design footprint of the project mapped the localities and accommodated them. Where this was not feasible, search and rescue exercises were conducted and retrieved plants were relocated elsewhere on the property."

Protecting and translocating protected species was also to the fore on the Loeriesfontein, Khobab and De Aar Wind Farms in the Northern Cape and the Jeffrey's Bay Wind Farm in the Eastern Cape, among others. An interesting feature of the Khobab project was the use of specially designed concrete mixes which reduced the site's construction carbon footprint from approximately 300 kg of CO_2 per cubic metre to just 90,7 kg of CO_2 per cubic metre, dropping the project's overall carbon footprint by 31 %.

Many high-profile bridge and road projects have also provided platforms for Concor to display its skills in environmental care. It was the main contractor, for example, on the Mtunzini N2 road upgrade, which was opened in 2019. This involved the construction of a new highway crossing the uMhlathuze and the uMlalazi rivers and traversing 22 wetland systems. All wetland aspects affected such as unique plants and soils were either temporarily sealed off from the works and removed for later reinstatement.

Finally, no mention of Concor's skills in the environmental field would be complete without reference to one of its most prestigious current contracts – the construction (in joint venture with Mota-Engil) of SANRAL's Msikaba Bridge in the Eastern Cape which will span the 220 metre deep Msikaba Gorge.

The civil engineering challenges on the project, which include working at heights of up to 128 metres (the maximum height of the bridge pylons), are formidable but Concor and its partners have also been responsible for rescuing nearly 15 000 threatened and protected plant species and translocating them to on-site holding nurseries. The plants have subsequently been replanted at carefully selected sites near the bridge.

"We have also had to consider the sensitivities of a colony of rare Cape vultures," says Paul. "The Cape vulture, also known as the Cape Griffon, was listed in 2015 as a regionally endangered species.

Measures included paying careful attention to blasting operations to limit disturbance to the colony, particularly in the breeding season."

Paul believes the attention to environmental concerns displayed on the Msikaba Bridge project will become a benchmark for the civil engineering industry. "The engineering that's going into the bridge is amazing but the project is also a landmark in terms of the environmental care that is accompanying construction activities. It shows that construction can be carried out very successfully and with low impact in even the most sensitive of environments," he concludes.

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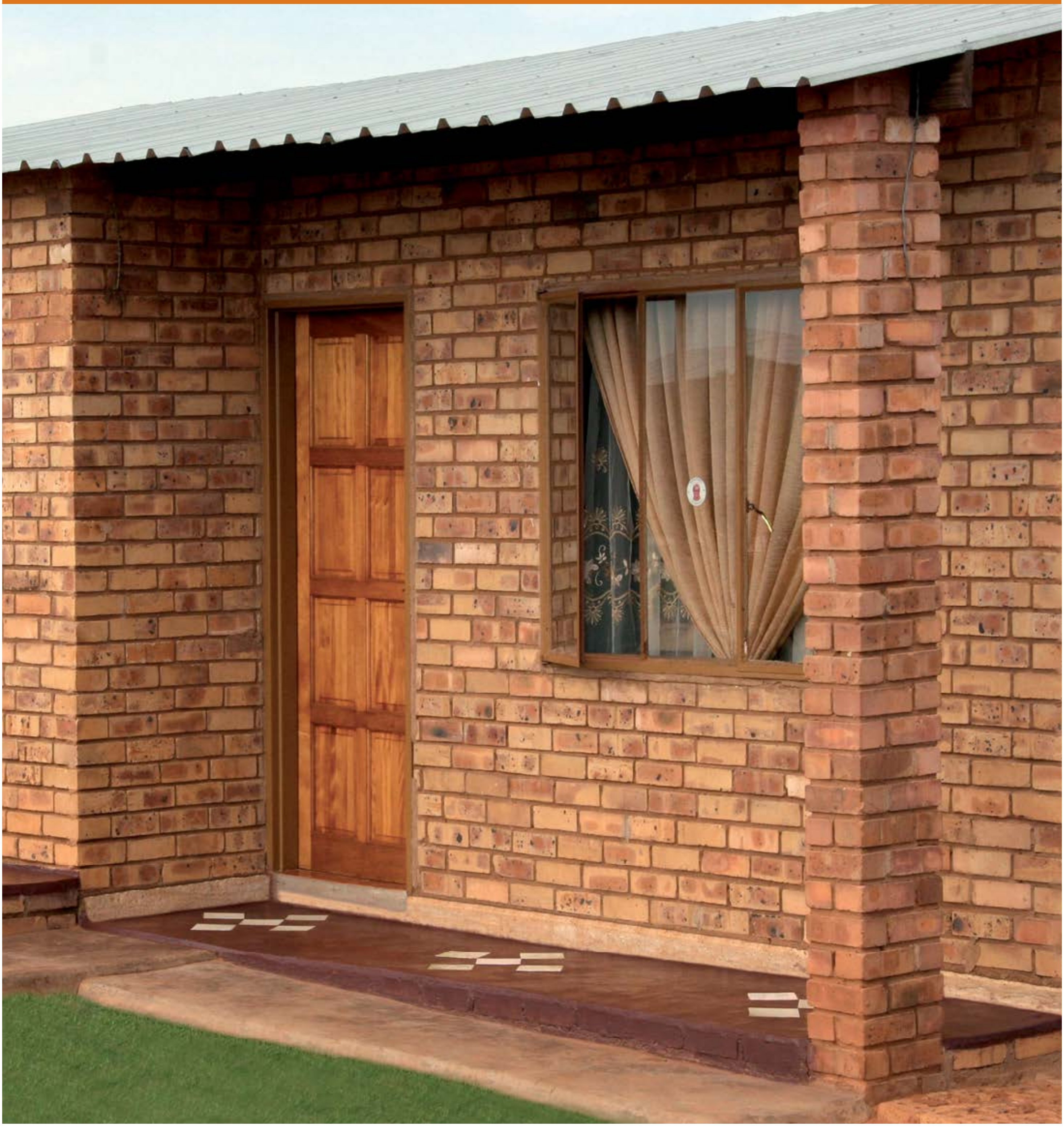

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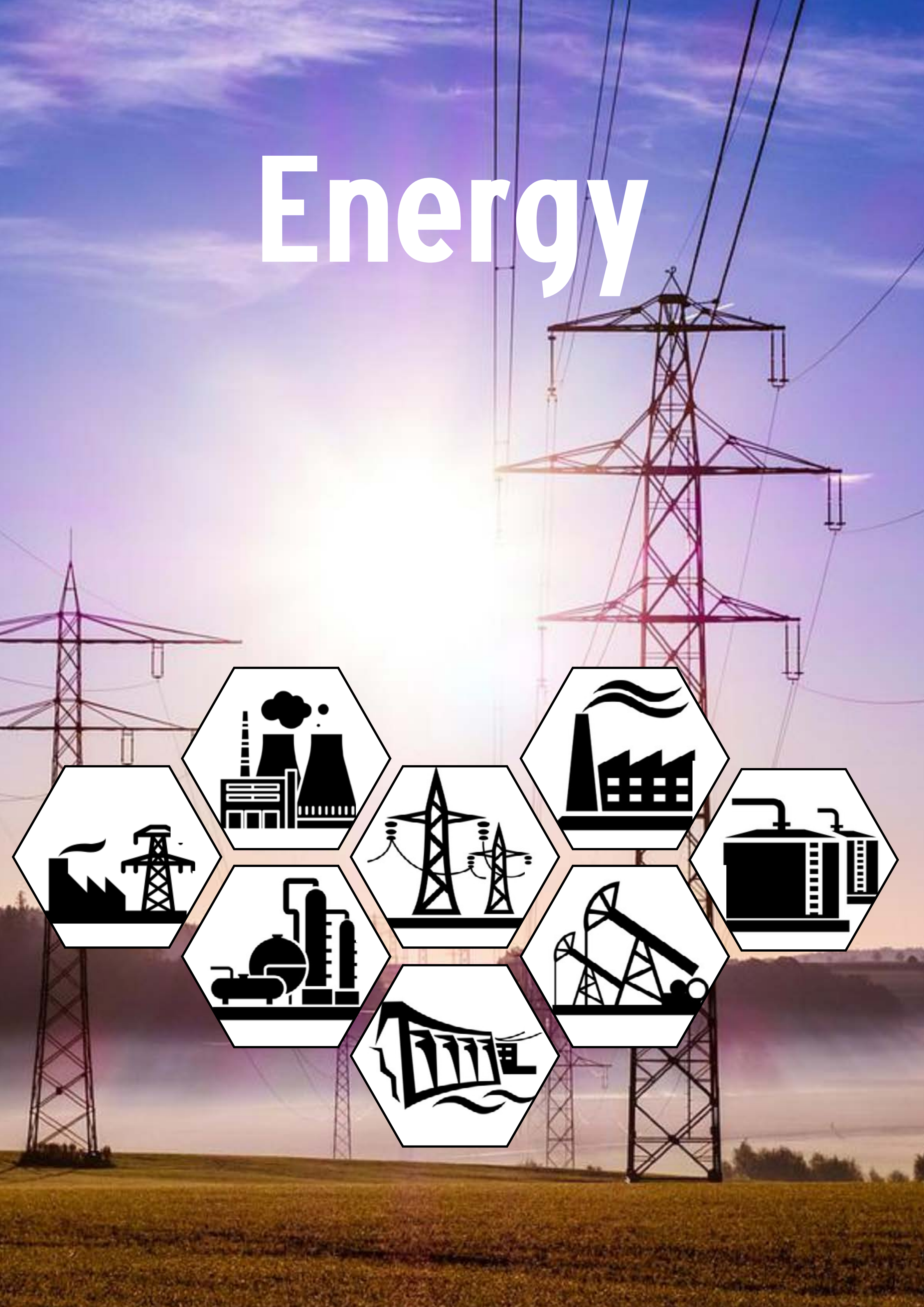

Power Transformer Market Growth Trends

Power Transformer Market: Segmented by Rating (Small Power Transformer (100-500 MVA), Medium Power Transformer (500-800 MVA), Large Power Transformer (more than 800 MVA)), by Cooling Method Type (Oil-Cooled, Air-Cooled), by Core (Closed, Shell, Berry), by Winding (Two Winding, Auto-Transformer), by Phase (Single Phase, 3–Phase), by Application (Residential & Commercial, Utility, Industrial), and by Region – Global Industry Sizing, Growth, Trend, Opportunity, and Forecast (2021–2027)

Power transformer market report covers a thorough analysis of the market dynamics, business models, segmental/regional analysis, and respective market shares and strategies adopted by the key market players operating in the global market. It entails an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing the global market and market statistics indicating region-wise and segment-wise market share/growth analysis. The report's study will outlook one of the most exhaustive analyses of the market, capturing all the aspects of the power transformer market.

Power Transformer Industry Outlook

The global power transformer market size was valued at USD 30.12 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach USD 48.12 billion in 2027, at a CAGR of 7.80%, during the forecast period, 2021-2027. The development of Shell Power Transformer is gaining momentum across the globe, aided by a wide variety of low-voltage applications. Moreover, due to the rapidly evolving distribution and generation of electricity, the trend of smart power transformers is increasing. Smart power transformers are expected to expand to disaster-recovery consequences, redefining electrical grids and creating distribution systems capable of handling a massive influx of stored and renewable energy. Over the forecast period, these factors will augment the global power transformer market.

Factors Affecting the Power Transformer Market over the Forecast Period

The growing knowledge, awareness, and deployment of renewable energy are the key driver of the global power transformer market.

High demand and rising initiatives for smart grid development and governments investing in replacing aging grid infrastructure are boosting the market growth.

In the global power transformer market, implementing green transformer and HVDC transmission methods for long-distance transmission creates numerous opportunities. Moreover, expanding cross-border trade in electricity would also tend to expand the global market growth.

The high initial cost is the key factor hampering the market growth

- The key restraining factors for the global power transformer market are high initial costs and longer construction time.
- Lack of standardization and complex architecture is also hampering market growth.
- The inability to upgrade an aging infrastructure impedes the growth of the market.
- For the global power transformer market, delays in Grid expansion projects and economic slowdown pose numerous challenges.

Impact of COVID-19 on Power Transformer Market:

The global power transformer market has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and several companies and firms have been temporarily shut, leading to a significant slowdown in production. COVID-19 influences the global economy in three primary ways: influencing production and consumption,

disturbing supply chain and market, and its financial effect on companies. Using AI can help minimize operational costs, and at the same time, can improve customer satisfaction during the renewal process, claims, and other services.

Scope of the Report

The report outlines the global power transformer market based on rating, type of cooling method, core type, winding, phase, and application.

Based on the rating, the power transformer market has been segmented into –

- Small Power Transformer (100-500 MVA)
- Medium Power Transformer (500-800 MVA)
- Large Power Transformer (more than 800 MVA)

Based on the cooling method type, the power transformer market has been segmented into –

- Oil-Cooled Power Transformer
- Air-Cooled Power Transformer

Based on the core type, the power transformer market has been segmented into –

- Closed Power Transformer
- Shell Power Transformer
- Berry Power Transformer

Based on the winding, the power transformer market has been segmented into –

- Two Winding
- Auto-Transformer

Based on the phase, the power transformer market has been segmented into –

- Single-phase
- 3 – phase

Based on the application, the power transformer market has been segmented into –

- Residential & Commercial
  - Hotels
  - Hospitals
  - Apartments
- Utility
- Industrial
  - Railways
  - Cement
  - Power distribution
  - Oil & gas
- Others

Power Transformer Market: Regional Outlook

The global power transformer market has been segmented into five geographical regions: North America, Asia Pacific, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In 2020, Asia Pacific had the largest share in the global power transformer market, followed by Europe and North America. The market is being expanded by recent innovations and improvements to the aging power infrastructure in the Asia Pacific region. Furthermore, Asia Pacific is the fastest-growing market and is anticipated to project the highest CAGR in the global market over the forecast period.

Key Global Power Transformer Market Competitors Includes –

The global power transformer market is highly fragmented, with a large number of players across the globe. The key players operating in the global Power Transformers market include –

- ABB Limited
- SPX Transformer Solutions Incorporated
- Celme
- Kirloskar Electric Co. Ltd.
- Hyosung Power & Industrial Systems PG
- Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)
- Daihen Corporation
- General Electric Company
- Siemens AG
- Schneider Electric

- Mitsubishi Electric Corporation
- Toshiba Corporation
- CG Power and Industrial Solutions Limited
- Hyundai Electric & Energy Systems Corporate Limited
- Hammond Power Solutions, Inc
- Voltamp Transformers Limited.

The power transformer market report provides a thorough analysis of macro-economic factors and the market attractiveness of every segment. The report will include an in-depth qualitative and quantitative assessment of the segmental/regional outlook with the market players in the respective segment and region/country. The information concluded in the report includes the inputs.

Power Transformer Market Report Covers Comprehensive Analysis On:

- Market Segmentation & Regional Analysis
- Market Size of 10 years
- Pricing Analysis
- Supply & Demand Analysis
- Product Life Cycle Analysis
- Porter's Five Forces & Value Chain Analysis
- Developed & Emerging Economies Analysis
- PEST Analysis
- Market and Forecast Factor Analysis
- Market Opportunities, Risks, & Trends
- Conclusion & Recommendation
- Regulatory Landscape
- Patent Analysis
- Competition Landscape
- 15+ Company Profiles

Power Transformer Market Regional Analysis Includes:

- North America (US, Canada, Mexico)
- South America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Rest of Latin America)
- Europe (Germany, Italy, France, UK, Spain, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Rest of Europe)
- Asia Pacific (China, Japan, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Singapore, Australia & New Zealand, Rest of Asia Pacific)
- The Middle East & Africa (Saudi Arabia, UAE, South Africa, Northern Africa, Rest of MEA

Power Transformer Market: Target Audience

- Power Transformer manufacturers
- Surgical equipment and personal protective equipment manufacturers
- Healthcare manufacturers, distributors, and suppliers
- Trade publications and magazines
- Government authorities, associations, and organizations

Food

Make Africa Food Sufficient

By Kingsley Asare

The minister also reiterated the need for the continent to unite in its fight against the "unfair and 'perceived' riskiness of investment opportunities on the continent compared to those in the West."

He said the united front against the unfair perception of risk was needed to augment efforts to increase investment inflows into the continent.

Addressing the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the ATI in Accra, Mr Ofori-Atta said African governments must leverage the wealth of continental bodies such as the Africa Trade Insurance (ATI) and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to increase food production and reduce the reliance on imports as well as remove deliberate doubts placed on investments in the continent.

The minister, who is the Board Chairman of the continental trade insurer, was opening the AGM that was being attended by Finance Ministers and representatives from the 20-member countries, investors, board of directors and staff and key officers in the insurance industry in the continent.

He said the fight to make Africa food sufficient was particularly necessary to curb the imminent rise in hunger levels in the continent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The investment banker and economist said that the two global crises were pushing more than 46 million Africans into hunger.

This, he said required that the attainment of a sustainable food and agricultural sector in Africa must become a primary concern for all.

Given the ATI's wealth of experience and resources, including more than US$580 million of assets under management, a balance sheet of US$767.4 million and profits in excess of US$34.8 million as of 2021, Mr Ofori-Atta said the institution could be leveraged to help address the food challenges facing the continent.

"Of course, with inflation at record highs, fertilizer prices more than doubling, and the number of people experiencing hunger estimated to have increased by 46 million in Africa, prioritizing the attainment of a sustainable food and agriculture sector in Africa must also be a primary concern for all of us," he said, noting that the company was not new to the agricultural sector.

"Permit me to share an example of ATI's contribution to food security in Africa."

"At the onset of the pandemic, ATI supported an Agribusiness and Food Company in East Africa with a facility that allowed the company to sell wheat to seven African countries at competitive rates."

"This transaction was valued at US$11 million and covered against the risk of non-payment."

Please turn Over

Make Africa Food Sufficient

"Such support for fortifying food supply chains must continue to be a feature of ATI's activities, particularly with the operationalisation of the AfCFTA, which creates a single market for goods and services," he said.

He noted that with the war in Ukraine still raging on, Africa could not afford to be complacent about creating the right conditions for food security and trade growth.

He said it was also clear that policymakers and development finance institutions alike must face up to their shared responsibility for sustaining and strengthening economic recovery across the continent.

The Finance Minister also commended the ATI for its work in Ghana, noting that he was encouraged by the progress ATI had made here in Ghana.

"Since launching its 'Ghanaian operations' in February 2020, the institution has been instrumental in enhancing our health sector's capacity and quality. Additionally, ATI has offered targeted support towards addressing balance of payments challenges and supporting our local currency.

"For us in government, we intend to continue our discussions with ATI on other transactions that support the achievement of objectives within Ghana's Agenda 2030," Mr Ofori-Atta said.

China-Nigeria agricultural cooperation aims for greater food production

by Olatunji Saliu and Guo Jun

On a farm in the northwest suburb of Abuja, Nigeria's capital, Wang Xuemin, sweating profusely under the hot sun in June, walked along a ridge between rice paddy fields where a big harvest is apparently expected.

He stopped from time to time and raised the loudspeaker in his hand, speaking to the crowd following him about the rice varieties, estimated yields and planting techniques used on the paddy fields, and answering questions from the crowd.

This is a field program on the promotion of Chinese rice planting and breeding techniques conducted by a Chinese company in Abuja recently, which attracted dozens of Nigerian agricultural officials, experts and farmers.

Wang is the assistant general manager and rice expert of Green Agriculture West Africa Limited (GAWAL), a Chinese firm that currently operates at least four demonstration rice farms in Nigeria. He is full of confidence in the prospect of China-Nigerian agricultural cooperation, and believes that Chinese rice technology, especially hybrid rice, will greatly help African countries including Nigeria to increase food production and ensure food security.

"This year, we introduced (Chinese) hybrid rice to be planted in four demonstration rice farms in Nigeria, and (the) harvest from two farms shows the yield of hybrid rice increases by 30 percent to 55 percent (compared with rice varieties mainly planted by local people)," said Wang.

According to Wang, a conventional rice variety bred by the GAWAL using Chinese rice technology can increase production by about 25 percent compared with the local main varieties. It has been approved by the Nigerian government in 2017, and is now sold to farmers all over Nigeria.

Speaking to Xinhua, Olusegun Ojo, director-general of the National Agricultural Seeds Council, said rice is one of the staple foods of Nigerians, and he was deeply impressed by China's rice planting and breeding techniques. Nigeria is seeking to increase food production, reduce imports and ensure food security, and there is great room for cooperation between Nigeria and China in the field of agriculture.

"Seeing is believing. We have brought our people here to come and see what they are doing," Ojo said.

"One farmer confirmed to us that the seeds that they are getting here are by far better than the ones they have been using before. He also mentioned that because of the added productivity that is seen here, they have been able to feed their families, they have been able to send their children to school, and so on," he added.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with a population of over 200 million, imports a large amount of food every year to meet its consumption needs. According to the data of Nigeria's central bank, Nigeria's food import expenditure in 2021 reached 2.71 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of nearly 45 percent compared with the previous year.

Bello Zaki, a director at the Agriculture Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), said the result of the productivity of the hybrid rice variety introduced by GAWAL has been "very conspicuous."

"By their own analysis, the R1 hybrid tends to be more promising in terms of yield and income rate. I am happy that the result is very conspicuous," Zaki said, explaining that the ARCN had been trying to enhance productivity so that poverty can be reduced to the barest minimum and to ensure that there is self-sufficiency in food production for the country.

Testimonies abound on the success of the provision of rice seedlings by the GAWAL, and the potential to positively change the lives of local rice farmers.

"It has transformed my life because I have gotten more information on farming in this place," Stephen Elisha, a local worker at the GAWAL demonstration farm in Abuja, told Xinhua, referring to the modern rice farming technique he has learned from the Chinese firm, among other experiences he has garnered from there over the past six years.

"Now, I am not afraid to start up my own farm because they have trained me on how to produce rice and how to farm other crops," said the 33-year-old farmer.

Olam

Unlocking long-term value and driving sustainable growth


Health

Africa CDC signs with Pfizer for supply of Covid-19 pill

Africa's top public health agency (CDC) said it signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Pfizer for countries on the continent to receive supplies of the Paxlovid pill to treat Covid-19.

Data from a mid-to-late stage study last November showed the antiviral medication was nearly 90 percent effective in preventing hospitalisations and deaths compared with a placebo, in adults at high risk of severe illness.

"We have signed the MOU with Pfizer and we are going to be able to make that particular treatment available to African countries," said Ahmed Ogwell Ouma, the acting director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ouma said the MOU would allow African countries to access Paxlovid at cost.

The Africa CDC, an agency of the 55-member African Union, had said in March that the MOU was ready, but needed to be cleared by its legal office.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that deaths in the continent from Covid-19 are expected to fall by nearly 94 percent in 2022 compared with last year.

As of the end of May, Africa reported more than 11.8 million confirmed Covid-19 cases and more than 250 000 deaths since the pandemic began, according to data from the WHO Africa's office.

As rich countries have hoarded Covid-19 vaccine doses, some African countries struggled with battling the virus at the start of the pandemic.

Although African countries struggled early in the pandemic to secure Covid-19 vaccines as rich countries hoarded available doses, many are now well-supplied with shots but are having trouble getting them into arms due to issues of hesitancy and logistics.


Import & Export
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AfCFTA as Africa's Industrialisation Accelerator

The African Import and Export Bank in its recent report argued that the African Continental Free Trade Area would be the game changer in driving Africa's industrialization, writes Dike Onwuamaeze

The African Export and Import Bank (Afreximbank) has affirmed that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement would be the continent's industrial accelerator. It stated unequivocally that, "AfCFTA will accelerate the growth of labour-intensive manufacturing industries."

The Afreximbank's affirmation was contained in a report it published in this month, which was titled "Africa's 2022 Growth Prospects: Poise under Post-Pandemic and Heightening Geopolitical Pressures." It said in the report that the AfCFTA agreement would usher in a period of renaissance in African manufacturing sector and become a critical driver of African economic growth in the near-term.

The report identified East and West Africa as the regions manufacturing would play a critical role in sustaining economic growth. "The sustained injection of patient capital and rise of East Africa's automotive industry is helping to expand opportunities for labour-intensive employment under a proven manufacturing-led growth model and will expand the fiscal space to gradually strengthen the foundation of macroeconomic stability," the report said.

Turning to West African sub-region, the report said that despite the protracted negative effects of conflict and insecurity, especially in the Sahel region, members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are also expected to enjoy robust growth in 2022.

"The sub-region will be supported by the usual assortment of strong performers (Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Senegal), and by Nigeria, where the purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose sharply to 57.3 in February 2022, the largest expansion since November 2019. The telecommunications and financial services sectors, as well as extensive investment in strategic industries, are enhancing growth resilience in Nigeria. The oil sector, too, will benefit from a gradual easing of OPEC production cuts and higher prices, which have received another boost from the Ukraine crisis. The latter are expected to remain above the country's fiscal breakeven price of $62 per barrel, "it stated.

LDR and SMEs

The report added that the Central Bank of Nigeria's loan to deposit ratio (LDR) policy would spell a boon for micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), especially those in manufacturing.

The report, which was authored by the Chief Economist and Director of Research at Afreximbank, Dr. Hippolyte Fofack, stated that trade integration reform would reinforce macroeconomic stability across Africa as the agreement on the Rules of Origin, which would become effective later this year would accelerate the diversification of sources of growth and trade.

A section of the report, which was sub-titled, "The AfCFTA as the Industrialisation Accelerator," projected that AfCFTA would increase the value of African automotive market from $30.44 billion in 2021 to $40.06 billion in 2027.

The report also highlighted that AfCFTA would awaken the revival of industrialisation of African economies and also deepen and create an increasingly competitive regional value chains; it would also facilitate the emergence of more resilient supply chain and add more value chains through backward activities.

The report emphasised the role of the manufacturing sector in this projected economic growth. It said: "Moreover, AfCFTA will bolster sustained welfare improvement, with the rise of a strong manufacturing base which has been a catalyst of increasing opportunities for labour-intensive employment acting as an elevator out of poverty.

"Africa's industrial and manufacturing output, which went through a long period of sustained decline towards the end of the last century, giving rise to the premature deindustrialisation argument reversed course a decade ago and has been increasing steadily since.

"Expressed as a share of GDP,

manufacturing exceeds 12 per cent according to most recent estimates, up from less than 10 per cent a decade ago, having declined from 17 per cent when Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) was introduced in the early 1980s. The revival in manufacturing's fortunes has been strong, especially after adjusting for income and population. Since 2000, manufacturing output has risen 91 per cent in real terms."

Manufacturing share of Exports
The report said that manufacturing share of the continent's exports has expanded as well, from 35.5 per cent in 2008 to 54.2 per cent a decade later, with exports becoming increasingly more integrated into global value chains

It noted that the sectoral drivers of manufacturing in the continent have also witnessed increasing diversification, extending beyond traditional original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of products with low degrees of automation such as leather, footwear, and garments to include technology and fintech industries, which are driving digitalisation and more sophisticated industries with greater potential for structural change.

The bank stated that the growth in technology and fintech industries have become increasingly important and accounting for around half of Africa's growth in output per worker in the first decade of this century.

In addition to the emergence of strategic industries such as refineries and cement, the automotive sector has become a magnet for patient capital. "After Volkswagen established a car manufacturing centre in Rwanda, Peugeot and Opel followed suit by opening plants in Namibia to assemble up to 5,000 vehicles per year.

"Ghana, too, is now home to assembly plants from Nissan and Volkswagen. Meanwhile, Morocco has been extremely successful in developing its car industry, with around 80 per cent of its exports oriented towards Europe and the rest to domestic and regional markets," the report said.

Boosting FDI inflows
In addition to boosting FDI inflows, empirical evidence has shown that joining a free trade area could raise them by around a quarter.

Relatedly, through improving economies of scale, the free trade area will afford companies more opportunities to spread the risks of investing in smaller markets.

The report stated that in some countries, output would continue to expand above regional and world averages, being "supported by the increasing diversification of sources of growth that is expanding manufacturing output and trade."

It referred to the World Bank's estimation that the AfCFTA's reform has the potential to increase Africa's exports by $560 billion mostly in manufacturing, and boost Africa's income by $450 billion by 2035.

In addition to transforming the region's productivity landscape, the AfCFTA promised to deepen and create new and increasingly competitive regional value chains, as well as to facilitate the emergence of more resilient supply chains.

It would also add more value to the continent's commodities to integrate global value chains through backward activities, especially in the automotive industry that would play a key role in structural transformation.

For instance, in 2019, intra-continental automotive exports accounted for around 16 per cent of Africa's automotive exports to the world. And following current trends, a full implementation of the AfCFTA underpinned by a strict implementation of the rules of origin would greatly increase these numbers.

"Estimates have shown that the value of the African automotive market would reach $42.06 billion in 2027, up from $30.44 billion in 2021, propelled by large economies in East Africa, including Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. Ethiopia is slated to achieve the most impressive growth, with demand increasing from 30,380 units in 2020 to 112,814 in 2035," the report said.

The Afreximbank's report also observed that African governments are beginning to wake up to the responsibilities to aid economic growth.

It said: "To support the AfCFTA's implementation and capitalise on its growth potential, governments are developing critical economic infrastructure. This includes the expansion of special economic zones (SEZs), which have been instrumental in other parts of the world, most notably Asia, in developing regional value chains and boosting countries' participation in global value chains."

UNCTAD SEZ Programmes
According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the numbers of African countries with SEZ programmes have increased from just four in 1990 to 47 in 2020, with most nations hosting several SEZs.

A growing number of countries are executing plans to improve domestic production capabilities in manufacturing. In Zambia, the national strategy for the AfCFTA's implementation recognised the critical importance of MSMEs as drivers of growth and export diversification and is facilitating their integration into regional and global value chains.

At the regional level, countries are coordinating their efforts for greater policy alignment. For instance, regional economic communities are working towards more united strategies, starting with industrial policy and trade partnerships with OEMs, and developing mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral country agreements.

The report stated that two other factors would further accelerate Africa's manufacturing renaissance under the AfCFTA: first, the reordering of global supply chains, which has been accelerated by both the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical realignments, which could lead to the emergence of competing blocs with distinct technological standards and cross-border payment systems.

The report identified the second factor as the changing nature of China-Africa engagement. It said that despite the cost advantages of the just-intime global supply chain model that is characterised by lean inventories and outsourcing to low-cost locations, the pandemic has highlighted its inherent risks and encouraged a shift towards the regionalisation and 'friend-shoring' of supply chains.

"Combined with the rules of origin that prioritise 'Made in Africa' goods, the reordering of supply chains offers another opportunity to accelerate domestic manufacturing in support of intra-African trade.

"The changing nature of engagement, namely emphasising trade and investment promotion, announced during the eighth Forum on China-Africa Co-operation held last year in Senegal will bolster Africa's manufacturing boom. The Chinese leadership has decided to raise its annual imports from Africa to more than $300 billion, up from $105 billion in 2021 over the next three years and shift compositions to increase the manufacturing content of those imports.

"This includes the injection of $10billion in major industrialisation and employment promotion projects in Africa, direct support for the growth of African MSMEs and the establishment of a cross-border renminbi centre.

"Beyond reducing the excessive dependency on commodities to rebalance China-Africa trade, such measures will accelerate the process of technology transfer and raise productivity. Ultimately, this will enhance Africa's integration into the global economy, in no small part because global trade growth has historically been higher in more technology-intensive sectors," the report said.

SKF North West Africa secures two-year Rotating Equipment Performance contract as solutions provider for leading Moroccan cement producer

The SKF North West Africa team successfully demonstrated their expertise as a solutions provider and secured a 24-month Rotational Equipment Performance (REP) contract with one of Morocco's leading cement producers that operates over ten plants on the African continent.

When the senior management of the cement producer decided to reduce the cost of their spare parts stock, they were faced with a challenge. With reliability and safety as key focus areas of plant operation, dependable premium quality stock and optimised machine availability were critical in order to avoid unplanned shutdowns.

"The customer was inclined to purchase bearings from the lowest bidder which presented us with a price battle, making it very difficult to secure their business," explains Amine Ghali Benna, SKF Industrial Sales Manager, Morocco / Mauritania - Mining, Mineral Processing and Cement. "We realised that we needed to change the customer's mindset so that the cement producer can recognise SKF as not simply a bearing supplier but rather as a solutions provider partner."

The SKF North West Africa team therefore decided to adopt a new approach, building a solid relationship based on trust with the customer's technical team. "In addition to offering technical support, we also started hosting technical days and conducted on-site visits," says Benna. "Aware of the customer's challenges, we highlighted all the advantages of focusing on improving equipment reliability to avoid unscheduled machine breakdowns and the resultant cost implications. Our hard work and perseverance paid off and we convinced the customer to sign a 24-month REP contract for bearings and service with our local Authorised Distributor, AFIT (AFRICAN FOURNITURE INDUSTRIELLE ET TECHNIQUE)."

The scope of the REP agreement, which commenced in Q3 2021, addresses all the customer's requirements: The supply of bearings via AFIT combined with a local stock to ensure availability, offline Vibration Analysis on critical equipment and online Monitoring (Cloud version) for a critical fan including monthly reporting. Benna adds that training of the customer's maintenance team also, importantly, forms part of the agreement.

The bearings that are being supplied as part of the contract include Spherical Roller Bearings (SRBs) and Deep Groove Ball Bearings (DGBBs) plus housings for installation on a variety of equipment including fans, conveyors and ball mills. Benna points out that as these bearings are most critical, it is imperative that the customer has them available in stock.

For the moment, as part of a pilot project, the SKF North West Africa team is monitoring the plant's most critical fan that is responsible for extracting the hot air from the cement kiln. Installation will be expanded to the ball mills as well as the cement kiln and conveyor drive head.

The training programme comprises a three-day on-site bearing mounting course as well as Vibration Analysis and Lubrication Best Practices courses, the latter two taking place on-site over two days. The Vibration Analysis program includes two consecutive courses for critical equipment conducted over three days on the customer's site. SKF North West Africa can also provide optional Balancing and Alignment on demand. The first training session will be rolled out during March 2022, followed by a second programme towards the end of the year.

"As a service provider, we add value for the customer by enhancing the performance of their maintenance staff with the support of the SKF team. Moreover, by increasing equipment reliability and availability through optimising REP, thereby helping to prevent catastrophic equipment failure and reduce the risk of plant downtime, we are delivering the benefits of low OPEX (Operational Expenditure) and TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) to our valued customer," concludes Benna.

New partnership agreement enables Integrated Air Solutions to support local installed FS-Elliott centrifugal oil-free compressor base

Integrated Air Solutions, as a foremost supplier of world-renowned ELGi electric screw compressors, has been delivering quality air solutions to pharmaceutical, mining, food and beverage, agriculture and oil and gas sectors across Southern Africa, for the past 4 years.

The recent signing of a partnership agreement with leading North American air compressor manufacturer, FS-Elliott, has extended Integrated Air Solutions' capabilities to include the supply of spare parts, service and plant upgrades to the local existing installed base of FS-Elliott centrifugal oil-free compressors.

Pennsylvania-based FS-Elliott is a global leader in the field of centrifugal air compressors with their Polaris® industrial compressed air range offering reliable flow of oil-free air to ISO 8573-1 Class 0 from 900 cfm to 12,000 cfm, and their groundbreaking PAP PLUS engineered series flow capabilities of up to 24,500 cfm.

"We identified promising growth potential in Southern Africa for our range of integrally geared centrifugal compressors and see Integrated Air Solutions, with their substantial facility in Jet Park, Boksburg, supported by qualified technicians and sales staff, as a good fit to support their current business interests and future growth in the region," says FS-Elliott's Channel Partner Manager, Kevin Miller.

FS-Elliott offers significant plant upgrades aimed at lowering the operational cost of compressed air. Energy-saving solutions such as compressor re-rate, inlet guide vane conversions and control system refits allow customers to maximise their equipment's efficiency, resulting in immediate savings and a fast return on investment given today's high energy input costs.

Advantages of centrifugal compressors include:

- Certified ISO 8573-1 Class 0 oil-free air for purity that meets exacting standards.
- Low maintenance with no wearing parts that require regular change-out, eliminating the need for periodic and expensive airend replacement.
- Low-to-no vibration without any special foundation required.
- Superior control through a variety of Regulus® controller system options.
- Excellent reliability over extended periods with minimal maintenance.
- Most efficient (energy saving) mainstream compressed air technology

"We are excited to be partnering with Integrated Air Solutions who has over 30 years of centrifugal air compressor knowledge," notes Kevin. "We hope to save South Africa kilowatt hours of energy with our best-in-class efficient centrifugal air compressors."

Trevor Volker, General Manager, Integrated Air Solutions, wraps up: "Through this new partnership, which combines quality product solutions from FS-Elliott with our local experience and compressor technology know-how, we will be able to add value to longstanding FS-Elliott customers. It will also gain us a firm foothold in the centrifugal air compressor space by unlocking new market potential."

Ukraine war will impact lives of Africans

The Ukraine war may seem far away for many Africans, but its effect on supplies of food and fertiliser could lead to soaring prices.

For most people in Africa, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a faraway problem that has little bearing on their daily lives. Beyond the Ukraine-based African students who reported discrimination as they sought to flee the conflict in its early days, very few Africans have had first-hand experience of the war.

There seems to be a bifurcation of interest in the conflict. Commentators in the media, academia and think tanks have been discussing the war and its effects in Africa, especially as regards food security on the continent. But "ordinary" people are just getting on with their own activities.

Economic effects

The war in Ukraine is, however, having major downstream economic effects in Africa. Even before Russia's war in Ukraine began in February, many parts of West Africa and the Maghreb were experiencing elevated levels of food inflation. Average food price in the last quarter of 2021 across West Africa was 39% higher than over the same period in the last five years.

Covid-19 has jammed up supply chains, caused an increase in freight costs and worsened logistics planning, a particular worry for African countries that import most of their food. Local harvests in West Africa have also been decimated by poor rainfall, the high cost of fertilisers, a lack of government support for the agricultural sector and many other factors.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a sharp rise in the cost of wheat, a staple across Africa. Egypt is the most exposed country anywhere in the world — it imports 60% of its wheat from abroad, and sources 80% of those imports from Russia and Ukraine.

The price of palm oil, a fixture in many African dishes from Nigeria to Kenya, has also gone up. Neither Russia nor Ukraine produce the commodity but the interconnected nature of global markets has had a knock-on effect. Indonesia exports much of the stuff and has introduced export bans to keep prices stable at home.

Prospect of social unrest

Unaffordable prices of staple food have the potential to spark social unrest. In 2007 and 2008, drought-induced shortages of rice and wheat led to riots in many countries including Egypt. Most recently, the protests that toppled former Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir began in December 2018 as frustrations mounted when the government cut bread and fuel subsidies. This could explain why Egyptian authorities have fixed the price of unsubsidised bread.

The risk of social unrest is all too familiar. The worst of the soaring prices caused by the war may be yet to come. Ukraine's planting season has been disrupted by the war and Russian exports are not flowing as freely as they used to.

Russia and its ally Belarus are the world's biggest exporters of fertilisers, which could also affect local cultivation in Africa and as far afield as South America.

People in Africa may not be connecting the conflict with their day-to-day lives just yet, but this could only be a matter of time if things get worse as predicted. Leaders know they face an uphill battle to stave off economic anxieties that have yet to subside since the pandemic cratered many people's livelihoods.

The Gambia Bans All Timber Exports

The government of the West African nation of the Gambia revoked with immediate effect all timber export licenses and banned the felling and import of Pterocarpus erinaceous, known as African rosewood. Experts remain sceptical about how effective this ban will be.

"With these new rules, the Gambia Ports Authority is hereby instructed to refuse loading for timber logs unto any vessel for export," a government press release said.

The government did not specify the motivation behind the ban and did not immediately respond to the OCCRP's request for comment. Nevertheless, the move came amid the progressive destruction of Gambia's forest cover and intensified international clampdown on the illegal trade in West African rosewood.

Most of the global demand for rosewood comes from China, where it is used to produce antique-style furniture popular among the country's new rich. Following the depletion of rosewood forests in Southeast Asia around 2010, the epicentre of the rosewood trade moved to West Africa.

Intensive logging drove Gambia's rosewood population near extinction already in 2012. Yet, the country has continued to feature as one of the largest rosewood exporters to China. According to the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), the vast majority of its rosewood exports has been smuggled from neighbouring Senegal.

The smuggling network has provided lifeblood to separatists in the region of southern Senegal known as Casamance, who have waged an armed conflict against the Senegalese government. It was established by Gambia's former president Yahya Jammeh, who is a member of the Jola ethnic group, the key actor in the rebellion.

On June 8, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) took an unprecedented step and suspended the trade in West African rosewood altogether, citing concerns about its sustainability.

"There has been a lot of pressure piling up on the government, not only from the international community but also from Senegal and civil society actors," said Omar Malmo Sambou, environmental researcher at the University of the Gambia, who spoke to the OCCRP on Monday. "So they thought that the only thing they can really do now is to issue the ban."

Sambou thinks that the ban was issued only for appearance's sake, however.

The Gambian authorities directly engage in the illegal trade. I would call it a criminal enterprise, cutting across different levels of government," he said. "The confiscated timber is sold afterwards. They also profit from issuing fake export certificates." The Voice of Gambia has brought an accusation that even current president Adama Barrow is personally involved in illegal timber exports.

According to Sambou, the export ban contains a potential loophole, created by allowing for the continued importation of other woods aside from rosewood. "This way, rosewood can be trucked in, mis declared as other species," he said. "It might be the case that they will keep stockpiling the imported woods and then temporarily lift the ban and get everything out. Another possibility is that they will continue the exports secretly."

Meanwhile, Gambia's forests have continued to disappear, shrinking by nearly 20% over the past decade. "It's getting worse by the day. The speed is alarming," said Sambou. "Because of poverty, people are encroaching into the forests, burning charcoal or collecting wood for sale."

That said, it seems impossible to assess the extent to which domestic deforestation is linked to the international timber trade, and thus also the potential effects of the export ban. "Because of certification fraud, we can't tell which timber comes from Senegal and which from the Gambia," explained Sambou.

While the main driving factors of deforestation are population growth and climate change, the problem ultimately comes down to law enforcement, suggested Sambou, "We don't have enough human resource capacity to protect our protected areas."

Glass imports still reaching the ceiling

MOST glass products in Namibia are imported. In May this year, the glass and glassware import bill amounted to N$55 million, which is sourced from South Africa, Angola and China.

This averages around N$48 million a month.

For the whole year, that would be over half a billion Namibia dollar.

Namibia's glass-manufacturing ability is low, although there were talks in 2018 that Groot Group, a company to be based at Tses, would become Namibia's leading glassmaker.

The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) yesterday released trade data for May – and the picture hasn't changed much.

Namibia is still importing more than it exports.

According to the NSA, the country's total merchandise trade for May 2022 came to N$15,9 billion – an increase of 50,4% and a decrease of 0,8% when compared to N$10,6 billion and N$16 billion recorded in May 2021 and April 2022, respectively.

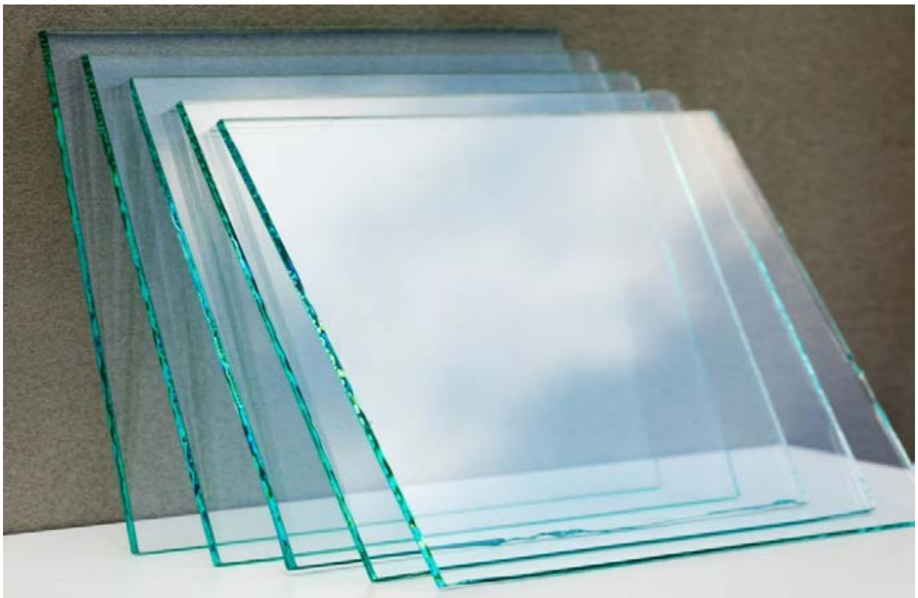
Despite the yearly growth, the country's trade balance remained at a deficit, though quite larger at N$4,6 billion from the N$4,1 billion recorded in April 2022, and much lower compared to N$2,6 billion recorded for May 2021.

"Namibia's trade composition by partner showed that Botswana was Namibia's largest market for exports, whereas South Africa remained the largest source market for the country," statistician general and NSA chief executive officer Alex Shimuafeni says.

He says the composition of the export basket for May 2022 mainly consisted of minerals such as precious stones (diamonds), copper blisters, non-monetary gold and petroleum oils.

"Fish continued to be the only non-mineral commodity within the top-five products exported," he says.

On the other hand, the import basket mainly comprised petroleum oils, copper ores and concentrates, civil engineering and contractors' equipment, sulphur and unroasted iron pyrites, as well as motor vehicles for the transportation of goods.



For May 2022, re-exports increased by 26,6% month on month – an increase of 121,1% year on year.

The re-exports basket mainly consisted of copper blisters, precious stones (diamonds), inorganic chemical elements, petroleum oils and rubber tyres.

According to the NSA, monthly changes in exports (down by 5,2%) of goods were mainly reflected in uranium, which decreased by N$660 million, fish which decreased by N$289 million, ores and concentrates of base metals which decreased by N$141 million, printed matter which decreased by N$71 million, and non-monetary gold which decreased by N$61 million.

Monthly changes in imports (up by 1,9%) of goods were mainly reflected in petroleum oils increasing by N$645 million, copper ores and concentrates increasing by N$643 million, civil engineering and contractors' equipment increasing by N$270 million, ores and concentrates of precious metals increasing by N$111 million, and sugars, molasses and honey increasing by N$88 million.

In May 2022, manufactured products emerged as the largest exported goods with a value of N$3,5 billion, comprising 62,4% of total exports.

"Export of products from the manufacturing industry increased by N$244 million from N$3,3 billion recorded in April 2022.

The mining and quarrying industry maintained its second position with exports valued at N$1,7 billion in May 2022.

"Exported products from this industry decreased with a remarkable N$511 million, compared to N$2,2 billion recorded in April 2022," the NSA says.

The demand side was mainly dominated by products from the manufacturing industry, with an import bill of N$6,5 billion in May 2022.

This is a decrease of 12,8% from N$7,4 billion recorded the previous month.

Mining and quarrying goods imported took a share of 34,5% of the total imports for May 2022 – an increased of N$1,2 billion from N$2,3 billion.

Namibia recorded a trade deficit of N$4,6 billion in May, reflecting a widened deficit when compared to N$4,1 billion recorded in April 2022, and N$2,6 billion recorded in May 2021.

During May 2022, Namibia's top-five export partners were Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Netherlands, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, while South Africa, India, China, Peru and Bahrain were major sources of imports.

Africa's Free Trade Area to Boost the Creative Industry, Generate Jobs for the Youth

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with 54 countries participating, is creating the largest free trade area in the world.

Africa's Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is expected to be a boon for the creative sector and generate jobs for the youth.

On 1 January 2021, trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) kicked off. The trade pact, which seeks to create a single market for goods and services and promote cross-border movement of capital and people, should boost intra-African trade, currently at only 18% and regional integration.

It is also expected to be a boon for the creative sector. Key players in the creatives industry said as much when they met in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2019, even before the trade area launched.

"We wanted to deconstruct the AfCFTA," said Josh Nyapimbi, Executive Director of Nhimbe Trust, a pan-African creative civil society organization based in Zimbabwe, adding that the creative and cultural industries can "leverage the agreement to advance our economies."

Similarly, Wamkele Mene, the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat, has emphasized the need for youth involvement in cross-border trade through the creative industry and technology. He says that the active participation of young people in the free trade area could boost jobs creation and catalyze economic development.

Africa's creative sector is diverse and includes visual and performing arts, crafts, cultural festivals, paintings, sculptures, photography, publishing, music, dance, film, radio, design, fashion, video games, digital animation, architecture, and advertising, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The organization notes that the sector is helping fuel Africa's economic growth.

"The creative economy and its industries are strategic sectors that, if nurtured,

can boost competitiveness, productivity, sustainable growth, employment and exports potential," said Pamela Coke-Hamilton, UNCTAD's Executive Director.

A report by the International Trade Centre (ICT) states that the AfCFTA agreement can create more jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for young Africans, recommending that ways be established for the youth to benefit from a single market.

Africa is the youngest continent, with a median age of 19.8 years while 65% of its population is under 25 years of age. A third of all youth globally are expected to live in Africa by 2050. Yet between 7 million and 10 million young Africans look for jobs every day.

Ahunna Eziakonwa, the Director for the

UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa, told Africa Renewal earlier this year that the AfCFTA "is Africa's best development accelerator yet."

In March 2021, Ms Eziakonwa and Mr Mene signed a strategic partnership on behalf of UNDP and AfCFTA Secretariat to promote trade in Africa. Both bodies again released a report in November

emphasizing that free trade in Africa could spur about 10 new value chains, many of which will support the creative sector.

These include mobile financial services and cultural, entertainment and tourism services.

Creativity is the new money, and it is time for Africa to reap its benefits, corroborates Carlos Lopes, economist and former Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Mr Lopes noted: "While there is clearly no shortage of talent in the continent, Africa has been relatively poor in profiting from [its talents]... Africa's presence in global markets for creative goods and services has been stagnated by its limited supply capacity, lack of intellectual property knowledge, obsolete policies and regulations, as well as underinvestment in the industry, particularly infrastructure.

Addressing this situation requires three solutions, according to Ms Eziakonwa. These are, knowing the opportunity, investing in enabling policy frameworks, and removing obstacles to mobility.

Africa must first recognize the economic value of the creatives and cultural industry, she argues. Achieving the goal of one African market requires a targeted incentives scheme that supports learning, talent development, and promotion in Africa, in addition to relaxing visa regimes to enable Africans, including those in the creative sector, to travel unhindered across borders, she recommends.

Nigeria's film industry, for instance, contributes 1.42% (or $7.2 billion) to the country's GDP, employing 300,000 people directly and one million others indirectly.

South Africa's creative industry accounts for 3.6% of the country's employment.

As the AfCFTA one-year anniversary approaches, top industry players are hopeful that the trade pact will tackle several hurdles in the industry.

Jacob Maaga is a Kenya-based performing artist and financial expert who has been working to promote trade in Africa. He says that "an enabling regulatory framework accompanied by legal protection is essential for youths to reap the benefits of AfCFTA."

In South Africa, award-winning entrepreneur Hannah Lavery said she hopes that the AfCFTA "will open communication between businesses across Africa so that we can start sourcing, manufacturing, and selling across borders."

These issues and more were discussed last month at the Intra-African Trade Fair in Durban, South Africa, where the Creative Africa Nexus (CANEX) Summit was launched, supported by the African Import-Export Bank (Afreximbank).

CANEX aims to support Africa's creative and cultural industries, and Afreximbank has set up a $500 million facility as seed capital for the initiative.

According to Afreximbank's President Prof. Benedict Oramah, supporting the creative sector is a good bet.

"At Afreximbank, we fully understand the power of the creative industry to catalyze intra-African trade, create millions of jobs for the continent's young population, and promote the emergence of national and regional value chains," said Mr Oramah. "We also know the power of creatives to catalyze industrial development because this is a bankable industry."


Logistics

Africa's industrialization hinges on fixing logistics

The African Continental Free Trade Area promises to open up the continent's market of 1.2 billion people, and improve the circumstances that currently keep intra-Africa trade around 17%, versus 68% in Europe, 59% in Asia, and 55% in America. Industrialization is the next necessary step, and the key to improved industrialization is improved logistics.

That was one of the key insights to emerge from a panel at this year's Africa CEO Forum, the largest annual gathering of Africa's private sector. The event in Abidjan brought together close to 2,000 political, business, and thought leaders. The session on how the health crisis is revolutionizing African logistics featured speakers like Ahmed Bennis, group business development director at Tanger Med in Morocco, Africa's biggest port complex; and Portia Derby, CEO of Transnet, one of the continent's largest rail, port, and pipeline companies.

The panelists noted that industrialization will enable Africa to create jobs for the 8-9 million Africans joining the labor force annually, and allow the continent to capture a larger value of global commodities markets. At present, Africa mostly exports raw materials, leaving greater economic benefits to other countries that add value through processing. That's because processing on the continent is more expensive, and that is because of high energy costs and poor infrastructure.

How CEOS want to fix logistics

How can the continent overcome the challenges posed by logistics? Different panelists offered different solutions.

- Bennis cited five factors that will enable African ports to be competitive globally: "proper governance frameworks, high quality infrastructure, human capital, increased financing, and market access."

- Derby said it's crucial to think beyond ports. South African Transnet has one of the most modern rail networks on the continent, and the port of Durban is sub-Saharan Africa's largest and busiest. But close to a third of the countries on the continent are landlocked; the same solutions won't apply.

- Uche Ogboi, CEO of trucking logistics startup Lori Systems, said there is space for all players in tackling Africa's logistical challenges—governments, private sector, financiers, and startups. In particular, startups can bring in innovative solutions such as digitization that increases efficiency in the sector. Lori is one of the few female-led startups of scale in the continent.

- Shipping giant Maersk's Africa managing director, David Williams, spoke about the importance of integrated logistics, an idea Maersk has been embracing in its own quest to become a one-stop-shop.

- Jumoke Jagun-Dokunmu, Eastern Africa director at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), said that as devastating as the pandemic was for the continent, shortages and delays—sometimes of essential products—highlighted just how much investment is needed in the sector.

So how will all this be financed? "I know I am taking an unfavorable stance as everyone wants lower taxes," quipped Transnet's Derby. "But how will the continent afford all the infrastructure needed to improve logistics on the continent, if taxes are not increased?"

Rwanda Govt, stakeholders discuss investment in logistics

Experts are optimistic about economic gains Rwanda could get by establishing itself as a regional logistics hub, to improve the supply chain and facilitate trade among African countries.

Earlier this year, the World Bank, in a report on Rwanda themed 'Boosting regional integration in the post-Covid era,' stated that Rwanda, serving as an intermediating node between the East and Central Africa regions, offers prospects to increase revenues and generate efficiency gains through the concentration of logistics services.

Given Rwanda's location, conducive business and trading environment, there is an opportunity for it to become a strong regional logistics hub, Antoine Kajangwe, Director General of Trade and Investment in the Ministry of Trade and Industry said.

He also highlighted how the country is at a level of competition with neighbouring countries in terms of transportation of cargo and even in efficiency of services.

"In many ways, we are able to make progress across the region but when you don't have trade logistics, then you are forced to import from distant countries because they have a way of getting products to you."

Rwanda has already made steps in establishing itself as a logistics hub with the Kigali Logistics Platform, an inland container depot that is soon to become a dry port within the country, he highlighted.

However, there still needs improvement in service delivery and economies of scale to drive down the cost, hence, become competitive, he added.

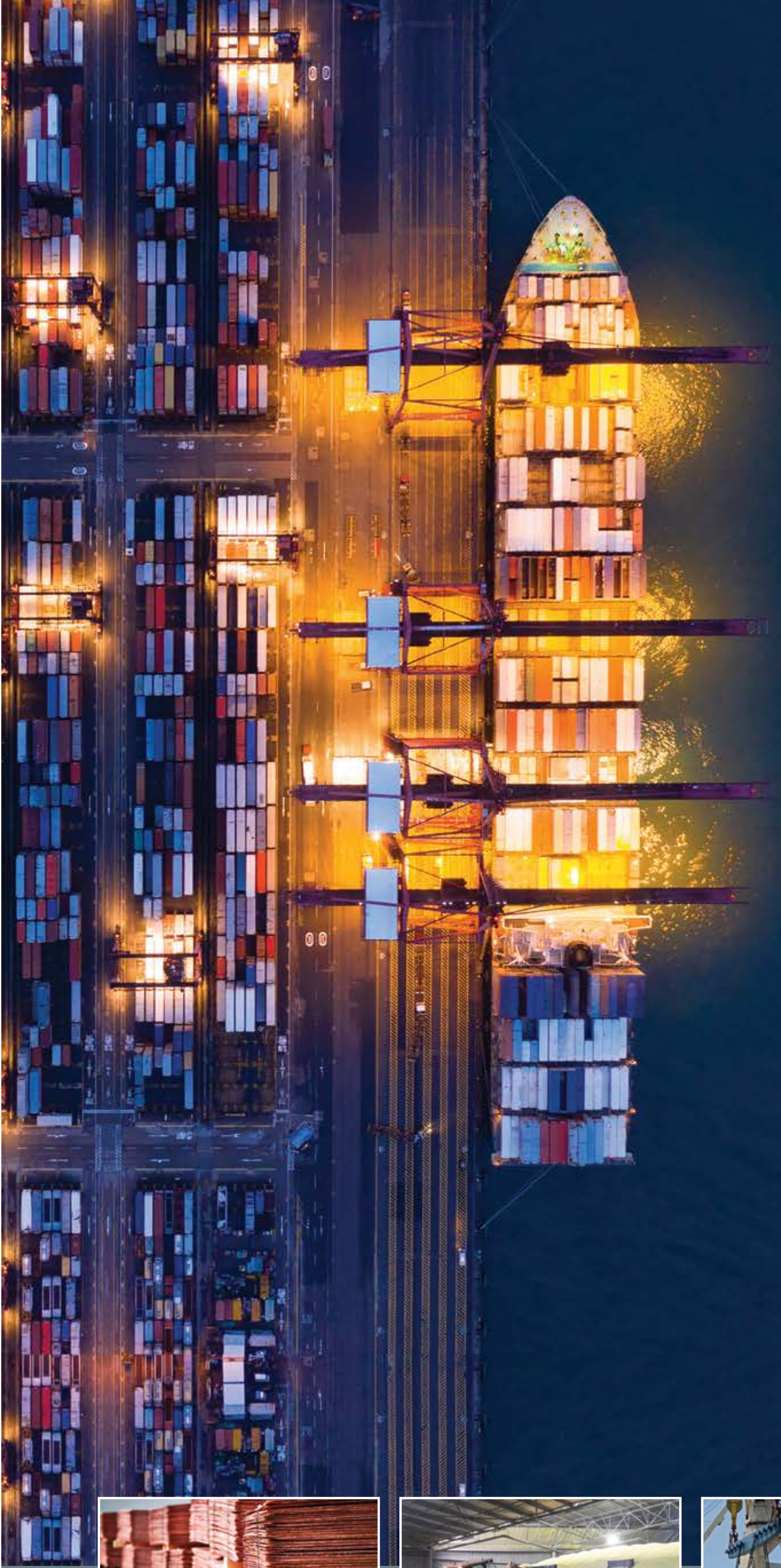
The World Bank estimates the value of transport services from Kenya to Rwanda to be approximately $50 million per annum.

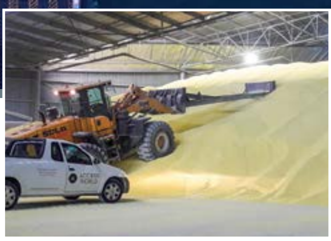
According to the Central Bank, Rwanda spent $3,201 million on merchandise imports in 2021, an increase of 16.5 percent from the previous year as the country shipped in more inputs to support growing domestic industrial production.

Kajangwe said: "It is an expensive sector, whether you are looking at freight equipment, ships, containers, railways, roads, it requires a lot of coordination amongst governments to invest in infrastructure and facilitate trade."

He mentioned that the right investments can be targeted in infrastructure, warehouses, and transport trucks, much as freight forwarding is a business that has grown over the last 10 to 15 years.

Cynthia Kamau, Country Representative of Kenya Ports Authority in Rwanda, observed that there is great potential for the country to become a regional logistics hub but underlined a low number of players in the sector, which also contributes to the high costs in the sector.





Mining

Zijin joins hands with MTN and Huawei to build southern Africa's first 5G-enabled metal mine

Nkwe Platinum Limited and South Africa Zijin Platinum (Pty) Ltd (wholly owned subsidiaries of multinational mining company, the Zijin Mining Group), have joined hands with African telecommunications giant MTN and global ICT provider Huawei together, and signed a collaboration agreement to build what they say is the southern Africa region's first 5G-enabled smart metal mine.

MTN and Huawei are to provide 5G-based ICT solutions for the smart mining requirements including, not only high-speed 5G broadband access, but also smart mining solutions like vehicle remote control, IoT, and enterprise digital transformation. "Once complete, the mine will mark a significant step forward in the digital transformation of the local mining industry. It will effectively demonstrate how a number of emerging technologies can be combined with 5G to improve functions across the mine."

This kind of advancement will become increasingly important as South Africa looks to remain competitive in the global mineral and resources space. The country is the world's top platinum producer and mining accounts for 8% of South African GDP.

"For more than 20 years, the Zijin Mining Group has regarded scientific and technological innovation as its primary driving force, becoming one of the few multinational mining companies in the world to be equipped with autonomous system technology and engineering management capabilities, with a well-established scientific research system and practice platform," Fan Zhiyu, MD and CEO of Nkwe Platinum Ltd, said. "In May 2021, at the mine launch, we stated that we would build the Zijin Garatau Platinum Mine into a project with advanced technology, solid safety, and environmental protection practices. The adoption of this 5G smart mining solution will certainly enable the Zijin Mining Group to deliver on that promise, and to establish the mine's technology-led global competitiveness."

"The development of metal minerals is laborious and technical work. Therefore, the Zijin Mining Group regards informatisation and intelligence as key strategic directions, and actively explores technical solutions that can improve the safety, process automation, and benefits of mining," he added. "The Zijin Garatau Platinum Mine in South Africa is one of the Zijin Mining Group's major overseas projects. The collaboration with MTN and Huawei will help the Zijin Mining Group build its first high-tech and safe overseas smart mine, brimming with socio-economic value, from the initial stage of construction. We will also work hard to promote sustainable development in Africa."

Wanda Matandela, Chief Enterprise Officer at MTN Business said: "Smart mining continues to a buzzword in South Africa. At MTN Business, we are excited to be playing a leading role in this space by using our world-class network and systems to promote the growth and sustainability of our enterprise customers. 5G technology is a game changer that will transform old mining processes."

"We have invested over ZAR50 billion in modernising our network for the past five years, this investment has put MTN in a greater position to offer cutting edge, faster and seamless connectivity to its customers. The partnership will see all parties involved reaping the benefits of our best network," said Matandela.

"Digital transformation has become a global trend across numerous industries, and 5G has undoubtedly accelerated this," Peng Song, President of Huawei Global Carrier Marketing & Solution said, "we feel very excited to work with Zijin and MTN to open Southern Africa's first 5G metal smart mine."

"Huawei is currently bringing its 5G-based ICT solutions into the mining industry and building a cross-industry ecosystem to continuously improve network connectivity to help Telcos maximize network value, and also help the mining industry build safe and smart mining projects through the capabilities of 5GtoB," he concluded.

This project coincides with a critical period of digital transformation in Africa's mining industry. All the three parties are happy to build the strategic partnership to support the success of the project and make in-depth contribution to the mining industry for South Africa.

How South Africa's Abandoned Mines Prey on Local Communities

Government inaction leaving communities at risk

*Thousands of abandoned mines litter South Africa, and a combination of poor governance and business practices have left many communities living in their shadow. Abandoned coal mines pose a grave ecological risk to local communities, polluting critical water sources and arable land, and specifically endanger the safety and lives of people who return to these unsafe mines in the hopes of earning a scant income. **Anthony Gale** talks with **Vuyisile Ncube** about her new report and how we can ensure communities are able to push the government to do better, including by holding mining companies to account.*

How big a problem is this?

This is a very big problem in South Africa. There are more than 6,000 abandoned mines in the country and approximately 2,322 of these have been identified as high risk, including coal mines. That means they pose an immediate threat to the communities surrounding them, and yet little or nothing is being done to rectify this.

When a company opens a mine, they are required by law to set money aside to ensure that when the mining stops, the mine can be decommissioned to appropriate standards. In practice, this cleaning up of mines simply isn't happening. There is no profit in making a decommissioned mine safe and lots of companies simply abandon them and move on. The government is doing very little to enforce the laws around decommissioning, so companies have little pressure to change their ways.

Your report focuses on coal mines in particular. Why is this?

In order to meet climate change objectives, governments, including South Africa, have to stop burning fossil fuels. Coal is the dirtiest and most heavily polluting of these fuels, responsible for 20 percent of global emissions. While transitioning away from coal is a good thing, rehabilitating coal mines should be part of the conversation about how the transition happens as there are significant risks for communities living in the shadow of abandoned coal mines. As we've seen in South Africa, when bigger companies look to sell their coal assets, those assets are more likely to end up in the hands of companies who either don't have the financial resources to rehabilitate a mine, or who see it as an unnecessary financial burden. This increases the likelihood that these mines will become abandoned.

But there is also the ecological damage that coal mines pose for surrounding communities, which is another reason our research focused on coal. Coal mines are incredibly toxic, and it isn't uncommon for acidic water, laced with heavy metals, to escape the mines and leach into the water table. This is something we have documented in our report, and it is having a devastating impact on local communities.

It isn't just coal mines that are posing a problem, but hopefully this research might contribute to a wider conversation about how the South African government addresses the important issue of abandoned mines more broadly.

Can you tell me more about the impact these mines are having on communities?

The risks these mines pose are far reaching. Obviously, the most worrying fact is that water resources are being poisoned. This not only makes the water unsafe for human consumption, but can also poison the land which settlements are built on, affecting the agriculture, livestock, and people for years.

As part of my research, I visited Carolina, a town located in the heart of Mpumalanga's coal country in May 2021. In January 2012, residents of Carolina were told by the local government that their drinking water wasn't fit for human or animal consumption because rainstorms had flooded the area with toxic water from the surrounding mines. For nine months, 17,000 people didn't have access to clean water, and eventually the communities had no choice but to take the local, provincial, and national governments to court. I visited the Carolina communities of Caropark and Silobela for this research and I met people who said they won't drink the tap water because they will get sick. The residents I spoke with walked to the nearby high school or mosque because they have boreholes, which has water that is safe for cooking and drinking.

There are also serious safety issues to consider. Some of the mines I visited were not fenced off and there are no signs to warn the community of the danger they pose. Some of these abandoned mines have since filled up with rainwater, and children swim in them as they don't necessarily grasp how unsafe it is. I have met with parents whose children drowned whilst swimming in these mines, deaths that were entirely preventable.

And it isn't only children who are dying in unrehabilitated mines. Artisanal miners are at risk too. South Africa's unemployment rate is very high, and this is the case in Mpumalanga where many people see the mines as source to secure some income. So-called artisanal mining has been unregulated for decades, and alongside the threat of tunnel collapse, these miners risk exposing themselves to poisonous gases, including carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide, and methane.

How has this been allowed to happen?

Put bluntly, the government hasn't been taking the issue seriously enough. Legally, companies must set aside the cost of rehabilitation before they begin mining, but we found that by the time the mine is no longer productive, there is often little or no money set aside to rehabilitate them.

There is a lack of urgency from the government on this issue, and communities struggle to get the information and support they need to hold the government and companies accountable. A community organization, Khuthala Environmental Care Group, whose members we spoke with, spent years requesting various local and regional government departments to do something about the abandoned coal mines in their community. When they finally managed to get the Department for Mineral Resources and Energy to issue a directive to one company to clean up the mine and establish financial provision (of R450 million, US$31 million) to address the environmental degradation, another South African nongovernmental organization discovered the company had dissolved over two years earlier.

So what needs to happen?

Firstly, the minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment should finalize regulations around the financial provision that mining companies should set aside before they begin their operations. This is something it has been working on for some time. Without a stronger framework, a practice of earmarking insignificant amounts will continue.

Secondly, there should be much better compliance monitoring and enforcement of the sector rules and more transparency around companies' rehabilitation plans. At the moment, there is a legal obligation to ensure funds are in place to close mines, but little or no effective monitoring to ensure these funds are sufficient for rehabilitation at the end of the mine's lifecycle. Enforcement of the requirement for companies to annually update their rehabilitation plans would help ensure they maintain enough reserves and make it much harder for companies to cut and run.

Finally, but most importantly, the government should do more to provide remedies for the harms communities face because of their inaction. There should be much more transparency around mine ownership, better ways for holding companies accountable, and where this is no longer possible, the necessary funding should be released to address the suffering these mines cause communities.

The South African government makes billions from the mining sector, it is only right that a fraction of this money goes towards righting the wrongs these communities have been subjected to.

Is there anything you would like to add?

Yes, I think it is far too easy for governments and businesses to lose sight of the human cost of decisions when they only focus on profits and losses. I applaud those companies who are looking to move away from coal, but this should be done responsibly. Communities that have suffered because of living near coal mining projects shouldn't bear the additional burden of abandoned mines that pollute their environment, water, and put their health and lives at risk.

Safely resolving reactive ground when blasting

When a South African zinc mine experienced a premature detonation in one of its blastholes, BME was soon on site to investigate the incident and apply a safe strategy to proceed.

According to BME technical services manager Deon Pieterse, the cause of the detonation was the reactive ground being drilled for blasting. This was an example of the exothermic chemical reaction that can occur between sulphide-bearing rock and ammonium nitrate-based explosives in the blasthole.

"The mine was found to have geologically bounded reactive zones within its rich zinc deposits," said Pieterse. "Due to the natural process of weathering and leaching, the upper benches of the transition zone are more prone to reactivity – as these benches contain more exposed sulphide or sulphide bearing rock and soils."

He noted that the area being blasted had previously been mined and did not have a history of ground reactivity. Where reactive ground is known to occur, reactive zone mapping of the geology of the mine can be used to mark out potential reactive ground areas in the current and future mining blocks.

"In this case, an unexpected detonation of three holes occurred after the loading process was completed and before blast firing," he said. "There were no injuries associated with these events."

The blast block was immediately evacuated and barricaded. For two days, other blast holes showed signs of reaction. This included the emission of smoke and yellow orange reacted emulsion froth coming out of the blast holes. After signs of reaction ceased, and the pit was declared safe, and an in-pit inspection was conducted. Ground samples were collected from the reactive areas and sent for ammonium nitrate and ground reactivity analysis.

"During our inspection, 35 holes were found to have shown signs of reaction," he said. "Other holes were temperature checked with in-hole readings of between 131°C and 170°C at one metre below the hole collar. South Africa National Standards require detonators to function nominally up to 85°C; anything above this increases the possibility of unplanned detonation."

Ground samples were collected from the reactive areas and sent for testing at the BME's Losberg laboratory. Here, extreme reactions were observed in two samples of reactive ground that had been loaded with uninhibited bulk ammonium nitrate explosives.

"We monitored the temperature of the samples during testing with a temperature data logger, and measured temperatures exceeding 700°C within an hour of mixing the samples," he said.

BME was then able to apply its urea-inhibited bulk emulsion – brand named INNOVEX™ RG – which is specially designed for use in reactive ground. Applying the same tests, this inhibited emulsion did not react, or cause any temperature spike.

"We then conducted ongoing characterisation work to understand the reactive ground at the mine," said Pieterse. "As mining progresses, drill samples are analysed and tested, helping us to build reactive zone maps of the geology."

In terms of safety practice associated with reactive ground, he explained that mines should conduct a risk assessment where they suspect reactive ground. This should include the monitoring of potential reactive ground indicators. If reactive ground is identified, he outlined a range of controls to manage this risk.

"Mines can use urea-inhibited bulk emulsion, as urea reduces the rate of reaction and slows heat build-up," he said. "Blocks should then be kept small enough to be fully charged and fired the same day."

He noted that, in some instances, holes may need to be sleeved with plastic liners before charging – to isolate the explosives from the blasthole walls. Drill assistants should then keep drill cuttings clear of the blast hole collars, to a radius of at least half a metre.

"Drill cuttings that mix in with explosives present a higher risk of rapid temperature build-up," he said. "Clearing the hole collars of drill cuttings will prevent activity around the hole collar – such as charging and hole priming – from pushing cuttings back into the hole and onto the explosives column."

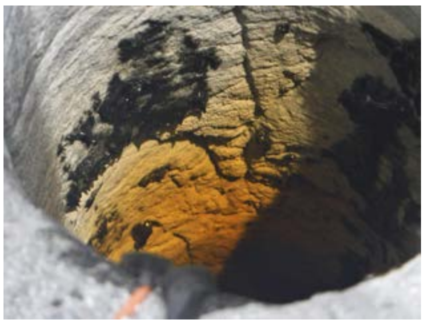
As a rule, personnel on the block must be kept to a minimum during the priming and stemming activities. They should also be careful to check that all explosive and initiation products used to blast reactive ground are compatible; also, each product must be qualified to operate within the temperature range.

"It is important that imported stemming material must be tested to be free of reactive ground," he said. "Unless stemming can be done rapidly using a stemming truck, blast holes should remain unstemmed."

He warned, however, that with no stemming in the blast holes, there may be increased air blast and more flyrock from the surface cratering.

"If the holes need to be stemmed, then this must be done just before blasting time – so that all holes remain open for long as possible to release heat," he said. "This reduces the risk of hole deflagration and unexpected detonation."

He highlighted another benefit of having unstemmed holes: they can be observed more easily. For instance, reacting holes may emit visible fumes, in colours of yellow, orange, red and brown. If this occurs, then the blast area should be immediately evacuated and secured, and personnel moved to a safe distance.



Technology

Vodacom South Africa Plans to digitise the retail industry

Vodacom South Africa's business unit, Vodacom Business, says that it has plans to digitise the retail industry by connecting retailers to suppliers. It has started deploying Software-Defined Wide Area Networking (SD-WAN) technology to retailers.

"Meeting these customer needs requires a connected, digitised supply chain," says Lerato Motsoeneng, Managing Executive for Retail and Logistics at Vodacom Business.

"Without the right digital infrastructure in place, retailers can't evolve their user experience," Motsoeneng says.

Vodacom Business says its infrastructure enables the creation of a retailer's online presence and the e-commerce platform and also powers in-store activity such as payments. Connectivity enables a retailer to offer in-store Wi-Fi to customers as well, and, from this, insights can be gleaned from usage data to drive more personalised marketing efforts.

It says connectivity also enables door-to-door delivery, which has been particularly pertinent in supporting a fast-growing online retail sector: groceries.

"Two years on, customers no longer think twice about purchasing their groceries online, knowing that it's secure and they'll quickly be delivered right to their door," adds Motsoeneng.

This means that retailers also need to be connected to their suppliers more than ever before to enable them to keep up with the online shopping demand brought about by the pandemic.

Vodacom boasts a platform, the Trading Bridge, which drives operational efficiency between trading partners, connecting retailers to their preferred suppliers. One of the benefits of the Trading Bridge platform is the ability to manage the information flow between trading partners to improve supply chain efficiencies and business service levels, the company says.

The platform currently supports over 3000 Corporates and SME trading partners.

Vodacom Business has introduced and is deploying Software-Defined Wide Area Networking (SD-WAN) technology at various retailers, allowing its customers to have a digital future-ready network.

SD-WAN is a technology that enables agility by simplifying network management without sacrificing reliability or quality. Retailers using the Vodacom Business SD-WAN solution have access to improved network connectivity and security, cost savings, and better business visibility enabling increased efficiency.

"This solution streamlines networks across multiple locations locally and internationally. As a result, retailers are uniquely equipped with a single-pane view of all data across multiple assets, locations, and resources (such as the people involved, from staff to suppliers)," Vodacom says.

As supermarkets and hypermarket retailers have a lot of cost pressures, driving efficiency is key to survival in difficult economic trading conditions.

"Fortunately, many have unlocked this efficiency with Vodacom as their digital partner of choice," Motsoeneng says.

Tech4Dev to scale up digital skills for 1,466 women across Africa

Technology for Social Change and Development Initiative (Tech4Dev) has accepted a total of 1,466 beneficiaries to the Class of 2023 of the Women Techsters Fellowship from a pool of 14,509 completed applications and 77,000 attempted applications from 15 African countries.

The Women Techsters Fellowship is a free experiential technology learning and upskilling program for young girls and women between the ages of 16 to 40 across 15 African countries.

The women will be trained in Mobile Development, Software Development, Product Design, Product Management, Cybersecurity, Data Science/ Artificial Intelligence Engineering, Blockchain, and Mixed Reality/3D.

"We started the registration process in March 2022 and we had three stages of assessments for the beneficiaries and I can categorically say that we have selected the best based on the performance of beneficiaries across all three stages.

"I want to say congratulations to everyone who made it this far and I hope that the skills to be acquired during this learning phase will stand you out amongst your peers. Stay true to the program and I wish you the best," Blessing Ashi, Women Techsters Initiative Lead, said.

The Women Techsters Fellowship, launched in 2021, is a year-long immersive training and experiential learning program for young girls and women across Africa to acquire deep tech skills through six months of intensive training, six-month internship, and mentorship.

The initiative which is aimed at bridging the digital and technology knowledge divide between men and women as well as ensuring equal access to opportunities for all is focused on training five million across Africa by 2030.

A total of 1,167 women from Nigeria were admitted into the program out of 10,912 who applied. Kenya had the second-highest number of beneficiaries with 68 while 48 Ghanaian women were accepted.

Ethiopia has 32 beneficiaries in the program, Uganda has 29, and 24 South Africans have also been admitted for the 2022/23 calendar year. Egypt has 24, Mozambique 12, Madagascar 12, Tanzania 11, Algeria, and Sudan have six apiece.

Angola and Morocco have four students each in the program while DR Congo has a total of three students in the program.

In its first year, the Women Techsters Fellowship received over 4,800 applications from 19 countries and accepted 338 beneficiaries into the program, which is a seven percent acceptance rate from five countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, and South Africa.

"Congratulations for making it into the fellowship but I must tell you that this is the time to put in work because without putting in the effort, success may not be guaranteed. It takes long hours, sometimes sleepless nights but I can assure you that success is just around the corner if you stay dedicated," Oladiwura Oladepo, Co-founder and Executive Director at Tech4Dev, said.

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SOLVE Specialises in the following fields:
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- Manufacture of Ladders
- Manufacture of Scaffolding
- OEM
- Specialised product manufacturing
- Consulting services

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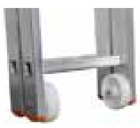
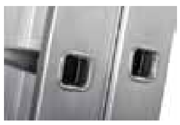


HEAVY DUTY EXTENSION



ALL THE WAY

MAERSK

Logistics' Digital Revolution

The Transformation of Data and Technology in Supply Chain Logistics