

Incentive project encourages lower-income areas to participate in recycling

In Saldanha Bay Municipality, a new initiative encourages residents in lower-income areas to participate in recycling by feeding hungry schoolchildren in return. **By Hugh Tyrrell***

Since it began in 2016, the kerbside recycling collection service operated by Saldanha Bay Local Municipality has been running well in middle- and upper-income suburbs. Each week, householders put out their recyclable materials in a clear bag (provided free by the municipality), which is picked up on the same day as refuse removals.

Participation by householders in these suburbs has reached over 40%. This is in line with international research showing that higher income and education corresponds with greater environmental awareness and action, including recycling.

In the lower-income suburbs of the municipality, the recycling participation rate

is below 15%. Many of those who do not participate, however, would understand the value of recyclable packaging materials, as they form part of the purchase price of groceries and other items they buy. There is reasonable reluctance to part with their recyclables without some form of compensation in return.



Recycling collector
Busiswe Madlaliso, showing
off the street trolley for recyclables

Pick n Pay

Working for people and planet

As a retailer with thousands of suppliers and millions of customers, Pick n Pay is mindful of its broad reach and the environmental impact across the value chain. It is committed to reducing its impact – enabling its customers to play their part in protecting the environment – and working with its suppliers and partners to innovate for a healthy planet.

In supporting circular economy principles, Pick n Pay's progress is underpinned by promoting the 'avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle' waste management hierarchy. The retailer's efforts include working towards ambitious commitments to reduce food waste across its value chain and to increase the renewability of packaging, with a focus on transforming the plastics system.

The company assumes a leadership role in local and international collaborative efforts that bring retailers, brand owners, industry bodies and the government together to sit and work towards long-term common targets for the plastics value chain. This will drive positive change for its customers on a much larger scale.

Pick n Pay is a founding member of the SA Plastics Pact, which was launched in January 2020. In 2019, Pick n Pay became a signatory to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Global Commitment to develop a circular economy for plastic. Pick n Pay is also a member of the South African Alliance to End Plastic Pollution in the Environment.

PETCO

Environmental solutions for post-consumer PET plastic

PETCO, the PET Recycling Company, represents the South African PET plastics industry's joint effort to self-regulate post-consumer polyethylene terephthalate (PET) recycling.

The PET plastics industry acknowledges that aside from the convenience and life-saving qualities of plastics, a solution for post-consumer plastic packaging is critical in order to minimise its impact on the environment.

To achieve this, everyone is involved – from the raw material producers, converters, brand owners and retailers, to consumers and recyclers, all are playing their part in the solution, with PETCO fulfilling the PET industry's role of extended producer responsibility (EPR). EPR promotes the integration of the environmental costs associated with PET products throughout their life cycles into the marketing costs of the products, and shifts responsibility for dealing with the used container from government and the public to private industry.

Operating throughout South Africa, PETCO has been financed by a voluntary recycling levy paid by converters on PET resin purchased. PETCO also receives grants from brand owners, resin producers and retailers. This goes into supporting PET recycling efforts and ensures an ongoing monetary value for post-consumer PET.

PETCO's ongoing public education, awareness activities and support for recycling entrepreneurs and projects promote environmental responsibility and encourage greater recycling of PET plastics.



Council officials and the recycling collector at the school for the launch of the REEP project

GreenEdge Communications, the recycling behaviour change subcontractor to the municipality, then researched various approaches to providing an incentive, with this in mind.

A low-income suburb was selected as the pilot site, where a coupon incentive, exchangeable for food at a nearby shop, was initially offered to those who participated. However, this met with opposition from some parts of a neighbouring informal settlement community, which was not on the municipal recycling collection route and therefore unable to benefit.

The 'Recycling Enterprise and Education Project'

GreenEdge then came up with an alternative concept as an incentive. Entitled the 'Recycling Enterprise and Education Project' (REEP), it encourages residents to participate in recycling, which helps to feed a schoolchild at the same time. In exchange for a bag of recyclables given by a resident to the roving mobile recycling collector, a donation will be made to the nearby Masiphathisane Primary School feeding fund.

The donations are generously made as part of a sponsorship by Pick n Pay's 'People and Planet' sustainability programme. PETCO came on board as a co-sponsor, kindly contributing the specially made recycling street carts and uniform.

The recycling collector, Busiswe Madlaliso, lives in the suburb herself, thereby providing a community job creation component to the project. Thandokazi Mdungwana – the local

environmental coordinator for the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment – is providing environmental education, linked to responsible recycling and environmental care, to the school as well.

Creating employment while feeding young minds

The pilot has achieved a fivefold increase in recycling collections, though off a low base. The project will run for three months and then be reviewed. If successful, the aim is to continue it and expand to other areas of the municipality.

The REEP project aligns with the circular economy – diverting valuable waste materials from landfill into the recycling industry, reducing energy and resource use, and creating employment – while also helping to feed young learners at school. **35**

**Hugh Tyrrell is the founder of GreenEdge Communications.*



Street scene in George Kerridge, a suburb in Saldanha Bay Municipality