

Plastics|SA releases plastics recycling figures for 2018

Plastics|SA has released the latest plastics recycling figures which, according to the South African plastics industry umbrella body, show that SA has a dynamic, growing and well-supported plastics recycling industry.

“Despite facing major challenges last year, the plastics industry made important strides forward. Plastic bags manufacturers removed fillers to produce bags that are fully recyclable. In addition, 100%-certified recycled plastic material is now used to produce some carrier bags. This creates an end-market for recycled plastic products and helps to reduce waste to landfill. By ensuring that the products we create become part of a circular economy, we create a win-win situation for the environment and for the industry that employs 60,000 people,” explains Anton Hanekom, executive director at Plastics|SA.

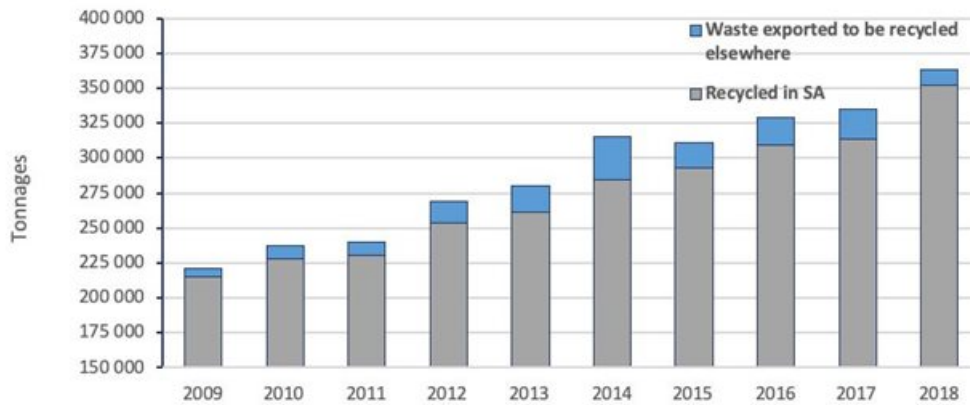


Key findings of the 2018 Recycling Survey are:

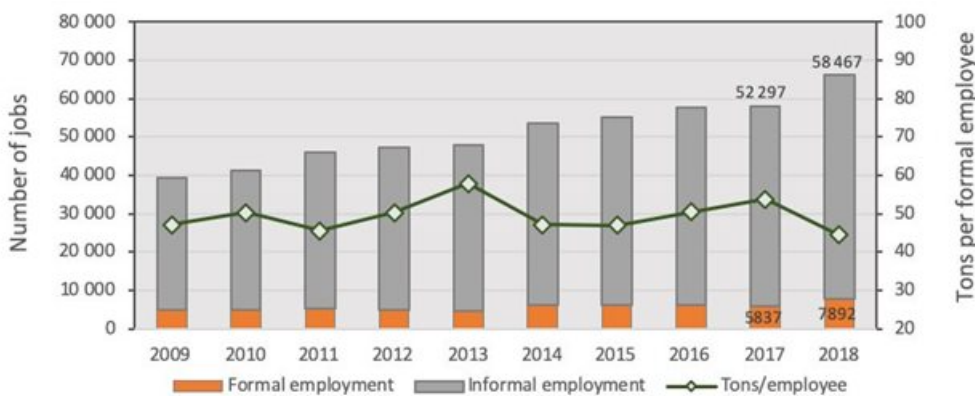
- More than 519,370 tonnes of plastics waste were collected for recycling.
- 46.3% of plastics waste was collected for recycling, making South Africa one of the best mechanical recyclers in the world.
- Growth in plastics recycling - 6.7% more than the previous year.
- 352,000 tonnes of new recycled plastic raw material was manufactured to complement virgin polymer in South Africa, a 12.2% increase year-on-year.
- Recycled tonnages grew 64% and virgin polymer 21% since 2009.
- The amount of plastics that were recycled in South Africa during 2018 alone saved enough oil to fuel 200,000 cars for

one year – travelling 30,000km/annum.

- Plastics recycling saved 246,000 tonnes of CO₂ (the equivalent emissions of 51,200 cars - in the same year.
- South Africa has 300 active recyclers of which 20% were doing 70% of the tonnages reported.
- The plastics recycling industry provided direct employment to more than 7,800 people and created a further 58,500 income-generating jobs.
- R2.3bn was injected into the informal sector through the purchasing of recyclable plastics waste.
- 70% of all recyclable materials originated from landfill and other post-consumer sources.
- 34% of South Africans do not have access to regular waste removal.



Amount of plastic recycled in SA during 2018 vs amount of plastic waste exported



Amount of job sustained through plastics recycling in SA

Looking ahead: Recommendations

In order to ensure that the value of plastics is repeatedly harvested and that a sustainable, growing circular economy is developed, Plastics|SA has made the following recommendations:

1. Improve South Africa's waste infrastructure. Used plastics need to be collected and removed from the environment. An adequate waste management infrastructure (that is able to deal with recyclable as well as non-recyclable waste) must be developed and put in place at municipalities around the country.
2. Reduce contaminants in the waste stream. Plastics recycling can continue to grow through collaborative effort to reduce the contaminants in the incoming waste stream, e.g. compostable and biodegradable material.
3. Provide assistance to recyclers in terms of challenges within their recycling operations.
4. Develop alternatives for difficult-to-recycle plastics. There are certain materials and plastic products that are not economically viable to collect, transport or recycle. Solutions need to be developed for these difficult-to-recycle materials.

Designing plastic packaging and other products with recyclability in mind and gaining access to good quality recyclable materials before they end up in landfill, continue to be the top priorities that drive the future strategy of the plastics industry.



Broll report details plastic usage trends in SA retail industry

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A South African Initiative to End Plastic Waste in the Environment was recently established. Representatives of the plastics and packaging industries, raw material suppliers, converters, brand owners, international fast-moving consumer goods companies, recyclers and environmental organisations are developing a workable, local plan that fits the South African context and our particular environmental, socio-political and economic realities.

“Recyclables are a valuable resource and should be removed from the solid waste stream before reaching landfill where they become contaminated and extraction costly. Similarly, stakeholders have to work together to manufacture locally, process efficiently and manage the end-of-life products so that they benefit the consumer, the industry and the planet,” Hanekom concludes.

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