FUCHS drives sustainability and smart lubricant solutions

**07 September 2022:** In addition to developing smart lubricant solutions to meet the challenges of its customers, [FUCHS LUBRICANTS SOUTH AFRICA](http://www.fuchs.com/za) focuses on economic, environmental, and social sustainability. “We strive for sustainability objectives not only across our entire value chain, but because we want to take responsibility for our impact on society and the environment,” says **Esther Seabi**, Transformation Director and Local Sustainability Officer.

Seabi explains that sustainability is a strategic pillar of the company. This, in turn, has two major goals: Achieving carbon neutrality and giving back to society in terms of achieving sustainable development objectives. In addition to our global strategy, South Africa has its own specific initiatives.

A local sustainability team includes representatives from every department that identifies initiatives on a yearly basis in support of realising these broad goals. For example, initiatives for this year include rainwater harvesting and renewable energy, as well as a project to insulate all piping in the main plant to prevent energy losses, while diverting waste to landfill is a focus in terms of waste management.

A highlight was the net zero design of FUCHS’ new local head office. “Our expansion was particularly exciting in terms of sustainability because of the emphasis on passive design elements such as using shading, sunlight and building orientation to reduce heating and cooling requirements,” says Seabi. “We have successfully completed our Round 1 assessment with the Green Building Council of South Africa to have the new head office certified as a net zero carbon building.”

Another key focus in terms of sustainability is FUCHS’ own product range. New small packs for the automotive sector with a reduced environmental impact have been introduced globally. The new bottles contain at least 30% post-consumer recycled (PCR) content and are 100% recyclable, while the lubricants themselves are produced in a CO2-neutral plant.

This is in line with the FUCHS Group’s sustainability strategy aimed at carbon neutrality based on the ‘avoid, reduce, compensate’ principle. The strategy has been under development for a decade. “Our products are specifically designed to assist our customers to be more sustainable in their operations. Applying good quality lubricants means a reduction in energy consumption, whether fuel or electricity,” says Seabi.

In terms of its broader community development focus, FUCHS has purely philanthropic contributions aimed at assisting local community support organisations and other projects geared to promote sustainable development and black economic empowerment, which are developmental in nature.

“My focus is more on those developmental projects aimed at capacitating local communities to boost their participation in the broader economy,” says Seabi. This takes the form of skills development, bursaries, and external study assistance, all based on merit and financial need. Looking at skills development in particular, the main focus is on helping reduce youth unemployment.

While the B-BBEE generic scorecard target for learnerships is 5% of the total workforce, FUCHS’ head count in this regard is more than double that at present. “Our learnership programme has been very successful in supporting our own business needs and that of the broader industry, given our track record of converting these into full-time employment opportunities, either with ourselves or other companies,” says Seabi.

FUCHS also assists Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to access more business opportunities. “SMEs are important generators of employment, which is why we not only promote their development, but advocate for their inclusion in our own supply chain.”

Seabi points to a maths skills project that FUCHS is driving in a range of schools, including Daveyton, Brakpan and five in Tembisa. “We periodically review the latest research on challenges around education. One issue we feel needs to be addressed is the accumulated skills deficit due to poor foundational instruction in maths skills. As learners progress through the educational system, this foundational deficit snowballs and its impact on learning becomes more pronounced”. FUCHS’ intervention in this regard is therefore focused on bolstering maths competency in the lower grades.

Skills prioritised by the company at present range from chemical to mechanical engineering and even commercial subjects such as finance, human resources, and supply chain management. A major focus is internal staff development, with all employees engaging with their managers on a yearly basis to identify career development goals which informs training interventions that need to be implemented.

The Fuchs Foundation Trust was established to promote socio-economic transformation by empowering economically marginalised individuals and communities. The trust, in turn, sponsors individuals and community projects. Part of FUCHS’ transformation strategy is to provide study assistance for external candidates to build its own talent pipeline and support broader economic goals. To this end, it sponsors eligible candidates yearly, based on funding availability and according to certain criteria.

**Pull quote**

“Every year our sustainability team comes up with ideas to move us forward towards our aim of achieving carbon neutrality and how to continue our support of our sustainable development goals.” – **Esther Seabi**, Transformation Director and Local Sustainability Officer, FUCHS LUBRICANTS SOUTH AFRICA

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FUCHS develops, produces, and markets high-grade lubricants and related specialties for virtually all industries Founded in 1931 as a family business in Mannheim, FUCHS is now the world's largest independent supplier of innovative lubricant solutions, covering almost every industry and application. Today, the company’s 6 000 employees in over 50 countries still share the same goal: To keep the world moving both sustainably and efficiently.

To live up to this claim, we think in terms of perfection, not merely standards. When developing individual solutions, we enter into an intensive customer dialogue – acting as an experienced consultant, innovative problem solver and reliable team partner. The results we provide meet not only the highest technological requirements, but also help customers save on operating costs and emissions. Because at FUCHS, sustainability is not simply an empty phrase, but a mindset – and thus the basis and aspiration of all our business activity.

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