**NEWS ARTICLE**

R943bn mooted govt infrastructure spend is good news for zinc sector

**19 March 2024:** In his budget speech on 21 February, the South African Finance Minister outlined the government’s plans to invest over R943 billion in public infrastructure over the next three years to support the refurbishment and maintenance of existing assets and build new infrastructure. The government’s mooted Infrastructure Investment Plan will promote projects in six key sectors, namely energy, water and sanitation, transport, digital infrastructure, human settlements, and agriculture and agro-processing.

The Finance Minister also outlined reforms aimed to streamline the supply chain, improve efficiency, and ultimately attract greater private sector participation. “Supporting public infrastructure investment, I am proud to announce that as part of this budget, we are introducing fundamental and far-reaching reforms to infrastructure financing and delivery,” he said. Through these reforms, greater efficiency gains and infrastructure delivery will be fast-tracked. This will benefit all sectors, social infrastructure, PPPs, and projects with other finance mechanisms.

“If the South African government actually means what it says, and from past experience we are gravely doubtful, then this is good news for the zinc and galvanizing sectors,” acknowledges **Simon Norton**, Director of the [International Zinc Association (IZA)](http://www.zinc.org) Africa. “To restore our position as a strong, thriving economy, we must grow our employment base and rebuild our deteriorating waterworks, wastewater works and infrastructure.”

As South Africa grapples with infrastructure challenges and the need to resolve these quickly and effective, zinc galvanizing of steel remains a vital tool to protect and extend the life of critical steel structures. Corrosion, the deterioration of steel due to its interaction with the environment, poses a significant threat to the longevity and safety of steel structures particularly at the coast and in corrosive environments such as wastewater treatment plants.

Hot dip galvanizing using zinc effectively prevents corrosion by creating a protective barrier between the steel and the surrounding environment. Composed of iron-zinc alloys, this barrier acts as a sacrificial anode, preferentially corroding in place of the steel. In rail infrastructure, railway lines are galvanized as are electric power line poles. Galvanizing safeguards steel components from the corrosive effects of moisture and other contaminants.

Power infrastructure, including transmission pylons, substations, and other steel structures also rely heavily on galvanizing using zinc to maintain its integrity. Corrosion of these components can lead to power outages, disruptions in electricity supply, and even catastrophic failures when pylons collapse as a result of rusting. Zinc galvanizing safeguards these critical structures, ensuring the reliable delivery of electricity.

Beyond its protective benefits, zinc galvanizing offers significant economic advantages. By extending the lifespan of steel components, zinc galvanizing reduces the need for frequent replacements, saving on material and labour costs. “If engineers hot dip galvanize steel, the capital expenditure is well spent and in the long run much cheaper than repair. Moreover, it minimises the risk of structural failures, which can lead to costly repairs and disruptions to operations,” concludes Norton.

***Ends***

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**About the International Zinc Association (IZA)**

The IZA is the only global industry association dedicated exclusively to the interests of zinc and its users. Operating internationally and locally in Africa through the IZA Africa Desk, the IZA helps sustain the long-term global demand for zinc and its markets by promoting such key end uses as corrosion protection for steel and zinc as essential in human health and crop nutrition. IZA’s main programmes are Sustainability & Environment, Technology & Market Development and Communications.

In South Africa, the IZA plays a vital role in establishing the basis for the successful growth of the zinc industry by increasing awareness of zinc and its applications and benefits in key sectors and markets.

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