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CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT

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New range of environment-friendly concrete products

JESSICA HANNAH | FEATURES REPORTER



NEW PRODUCTS
AfriSam has announced the introduction of a new Eco Readymix concrete to the construction industry

Construction materials group AfriSam has announced the introduction of a range of environmentally responsible concrete products.

These Eco Readymix products are application-branded, fit-for-purpose ready-mix concretes, specific to the needs of various construction requirements, including foundations, surface beds, suspended slabs, columns and retaining walls.

The range of products follows the launch earlier this year of AfriSam's Eco Building Cement, which has proved popular and is

enjoying increased levels of sales.

Although the carbon footprint of each product in the range varies according to its composition and strength requirement, on average, the products have a carbon dioxide (CO₂) footprint of about half the world average. These CO₂ figures are based on the world average for cement, calculated in accordance with the cement CO₂ protocol developed by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

"These off-the-shelf products can be

ordered according to the strength requirement for specific applications. One of the most important aspects is that performance is not compromised even though we are able to achieve this extremely low-carbon footprint for the products. We are also able to produce ultrahigh-performance Eco concretes with compressive strengths of between 70 MPa and 120 MPa," says AfriSam cement product manager Mike McDonald.

Another aspect is that consumers have become accustomed to paying more for

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environment-friendly products. AfriSam's marketing manager, **Victor Bouguenon**, states: "We have made a conscious effort to ensure that our ecofriendly products are competitively priced. Not only are we operating in a price-sensitive environment, particularly in the construction industry, but we would also consider it irresponsible to extract a premium simply because the products are greener than any other on the market."

McDonald has noticed that some companies have adopted a 'green-wash' approach, in which, they claim their products are environment-friendly without providing the necessary substantiation. "Even though extensive research and development has gone into the product, we still believe it is our responsibility to offer a product that performs to specifications, offers a measurable environmentally responsible solution and is priced competitively," says McDonald.

The new *Eco Readymix* is a natural progression for AfriSam and is part of a well-orchestrated initiative that started in 1994. AfriSam reports it was the first cement producer to develop an environmental policy, which commits it to sustainable development and ensures that it complies with international best practise.

The company also views the reduction of its carbon footprint as a critically important environmental target and is the industry leader in emission control and energy efficiency.

"As far back as 2000, AfriSam implemented its green cement project. At that point, we started producing composite cements



CARBON DIOXIDE STICKER

All AfriSam cements have the 'Reducing our Carbon Footprint' stamp of approval

and effectively using less carbon-intensive materials. Being involved in green building initiatives necessitates significant investments but, far more importantly, it requires a consistent commitment and cannot be a reactive response to the market," says Bouguenon.

AfriSam has invested in excess of R1-billion since 2004 to incorporate in its operations such initiatives as reducing the use of nonrenewable resources like coal, reducing dust emissions, improving energy efficiencies and commissioning advanced blending plants to increase the use of mineral components.

Bouguenon tells *Engineering News*: "Architects are central to the sustainable building design process. For this reason, AfriSam has set up two green building

initiatives. We have established the South African Institute of Architects award for sustainable architecture. This award programme recognises outstanding achievements in design that incorporates social development, economic, cultural as well as ecological sustainability aspects."

The second initiative is the Construction World's Best Projects Awards. This yearly awards programme recognises excellence in sustainable construction.

McDonald is optimistic about future trends: "We predict that there will be an upsurge in the demand for green building and environmentally responsible developers. Clients are becoming increasingly aware that they can influence the direction of future development."

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There is no such thing as bad weather - only inappropriate clothing.