

Agrément SA launches Eco-labelling System for building materials and products

By Tinyiko Baloyi

The entity of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), Agrément South Africa (ASA) has launched the ecoASA label, an Eco-labelling System for building materials and products used within the country.

Through Agrément South Africa (ASA) the DPWI has facilitated the establishment of the only government-endorsed South African national eco-labeling system, known as ecoASA Labeling. The scheme is intended for use in the construction sector by issuing ecolabels for building materials and products that are environmentally sensitive.

Eco-labelling is the practice of marking products with a distinctive label so that consumers know that their manufacture conforms to recognised environmental standards. Eco-labels are also therefore, a means of measuring performance and also communicating and marketing the environmental credentials of a given product.

Speaking during the launch of the ecoASA label in Menlyn, Pretoria, on 30 September 2022, DPWI Deputy Minister Noxolo Kiviet said any environmental claims that manufacturers make would be verified through the ecoASA label.

DPWI's Green Building Policy states that DPWI will develop guidelines and minimum standards for using environmentally sensitive eco-labelled materials. These guidelines and minimum standards will be adopted by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and incorporated into relevant Standard Specification for Constructions Works of the Department of Public Works.

The eco-labelling system includes a rating mechanism based on a quantifiable degree of conformance with relevant specifications. It also conforms, as far as possible, to ISO 14024 Environmental Labels and Declarations: Environmental Labelling Type I, Guiding Principles and Procedures. Eco-ASA is aligned to green building council's rating tools requirements, both nationally and internationally.

The Materials Category of the Green Star SA rating tools consist of credits which target the consumption of resources through selection, use, reuse and efficient management practices. The credit aim to address, improve the environmental impact of the building products and materials by taking into consideration issues pertaining to the lifespan, lifecycle and approach towards the use of these resources within the building fabrics of Green Star SA certified projects.

Deputy Minister Kiviet acknowledged the parliamentary committee that graced the launch of ecoASA. She felt it was necessary for members of parliament to see what Agrément SA was doing. The DM expressed that the launch took place at a time when the country's heritage month commemorations were coming to a close. "This month has been a month of reflections, because it is a month in which we should be able to reflect as an organization, firstly as to where we come from, secondly where we are currently and lastly where we would want to be. This also relates to our constitutional obligation which states that: "we have the right to the

environment that is not harmful to health and our wellbeing, as well as to have an environment that is protected for the benefit of the present and future generations through reasonable legislation and measures,” said the Deputy Minister.

In closing the Deputy Minister called for everyone to take to heart the late, Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu’s, words when he said, “***Do your little bit of good where you are, it’s those little bits of good put together, that overwhelms the world.***”