



MEDIA RELEASE

One man's trash is another man's treasure

Immediate release

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World Environment Day is around the corner with a catch-phrase that will make you think – ‘Seven billion dreams. One planet. Consume with care’. The Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) shines light on South Africa’s waste activities and urges residents to start seeing the value in what they would generally throw away.

Celebrated annually on 05 June, World Environment Day is the United Nations’ main initiative to encourage awareness and global action for a better and cleaner environment. “World Environment Day is a fantastic initiative where global discussions are made to foster more conscious actions globally. These actions should however, not be in isolation but part of everyone’s daily activities,” says Dr Suzan Oelofse, President of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA).

Oelofse indicates that South Africa’s landfill airspace is fast running out, and it is up to residents and organisations alike to assist in reducing waste to landfill. “Recycling is often viewed as being filthy, time consuming and inconvenient while disposal to landfill appears cheaper. It may seem that the gains associated with recycling does not justify the effort, but South Africa’s landfill tariffs are not a true reflection of the full costs of landfilling. The value of waste as a resource and what it could mean to the South African economy is not understood nor appreciated,” highlights Oelofse.

The ideal waste management option according to the international accepted waste management hierarchy is firstly prevention and reduction. This is when fewer materials are used in the manufacturing process or innovative ideas are implemented to prevent waste from being generated in the first place. The next stage is reusing materials followed by recycling initiatives including home composting systems. The fourth stage involves other recovery steps which includes anaerobic digestion, incineration or gasification. The last and most undesirable stage is landfilling.

“When looking at this hierarchy, landfilling is the last resort. As stressed in the Waste Road Map published in March 2014 by the Department of Science and Technology*, the benefits of moving waste up the hierarchy contributes to a green economy as it re-introduces resources back into the economy, contributes to economic growth and job creation and reduces social and environmental costs,” explains Oelofse.

According to the Waste Road Map report* the resource value of waste, if 100% of recoverable materials are recovered and recycled, would be in the order of R25.2 billion per year. Currently, only about R8.2 billion per year of this value is realised with a recycling rate of 10% (as at 2011 baseline).

“There is a lot of value in our waste, which is currently being sent to landfill sites. The value of this waste will be optimised if it is clean and well sorted for recycling purposes. Residents should start being proactive with what they throw away and contribute to the larger picture of waste recovery. Start separating waste at source and take it to your nearest recycling station – a little goes a long way!” concludes Oelofse.

To find out where your nearest waste recycler is, visit www.mywaste.co.za.

For more information on the IWMSA, visit www.iwmsa.co.za. The IWMSA is also on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>).

* http://www.wasteroadmap.co.za/download/economic_value_sa_waste_rep.pdf

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