

Electrolux South Africa prepares for green energy transition

Home appliances maker Electrolux South Africa has embarked on its journey to exit the national electricity grid and move to renewable solar energy, cutting the organisation's carbon footprint at its local Kwikot water heater (geyser) manufacturing plant by 40%.



Source: Supplied

Ughard de Clercq, lean engineer at Electrolux South Africa said the organisation was expected to complete the development of a major 1 MW solar energy system at its Benoni factory by November 2021. The company has invested R16m in the solar system which it started building in July 2021.

“We plan to be climate neutral by 2030 in all our manufacturing operations. So far, we have implemented a 112 kWp solar system for our offices in 2020 and have saved over 96 tons of CO₂ just this year. We expect that the 1 MW solar system will reduce our manufacturing CO₂ footprint by 40%,” said de Clercq.

Solar to power 80% of production

Once completed, the solar system will comprise 1,278 solar panels that will power the factory during the day, supplying as much as 80% to 90% of the plant's energy requirements. The organisation also intended exploring the possibility of purchasing renewable energy from Eskom, to meet its nighttime electricity requirements when the parastatal is ready to offer privately produced green energy as an option said de Clercq.

“We did not develop more than one megawatt due to the roof space and current regulations limiting the amount of electricity generated via a solar system, but the government is looking to increase it,” he added.

When limits were increased to 100MW or more, Electrolux would also investigate extending its solar system so that it could sell power back to the electricity grid. “If the local law and infrastructure allows it, we would want to sell the excess green electricity back into the grid. We would like to be able to make a contribution to other organisations by supplying them with green energy,” he said.



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The company stated that it would likely also explore installing smaller solar energy systems at its geyser distribution centres around South Africa. “We plan in the next two to three years to start reducing the consumption of our fossil fuels by switching from diesel to electric forklifts that can be charged by our solar system,” said de Clercq.

“We are also investigating how to reduce our water consumption in the future by harvesting the rainwater to reduce our environmental impact even further.”

2030 goal of zero carbon emissions

This latest investment in solar energy at its local factory was part of the organisation’s global strategy to achieve its ‘better living’ 2030 goal of zero carbon emissions, partially by using renewable energy in production. The investment also follows similar solar systems installed at the company’s plants in China, Thailand and Australia.

Murray Crow, Electrolux South Africa’s Managing Director, commented, “We strive not only to manufacture sustainable products such as our appliances, but to manufacture them in a sustainable way. It is important to look after the environment and do our part for future generations to come.”

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