Unilever unveils R50m biomass boiler to cut emissions, waste

Fast-moving consumer goods manufacturer, Unilever, has unveiled a R50-million biomass boiler at its Maydon Wharf Factory in Durban that will reduce CO2 emissions, waste-to-landfill, and ultimately the amount of electricity used in production at the facility.



The event marked World Environment Day and was attended by Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs Barbara Thomson and KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs Sihle Zikalala.

“By introducing this fossil fuel-free machinery into our factory, we are taking a step towards reducing the amount of wooden waste traditionally sent to landfill sites. The boiler cost R50m to install, and we estimate that it will provide a saving per annum of around R17m per year. This figure factors in fuel savings, and will reduce the facility’s carbon footprint. The boiler will lead to a reduction of over 30% in CO_2 emissions and is projected to save 14,000 tons of CO_2 every year,” explained Unilever South Africa executive vice president Luc-Olivier Marquet.

The boiler is fuelled by wooden pallets, waste wood and off-cuts from local furniture and door manufacturers. Wooden pallets used as part of business-as-usual by Unilever are reused, and do not form parts of the biomass feed. The boiler consumers on average 940 tonnes of biomass a month – roughly the weight of 375 medium-size African elephants.

“Our new biomass boiler at Maydon Wharf is illustrative of the seriousness of our commitment to sustainable living. We have previously unveiled our Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP), which commits to reducing our environmental impact by half by 2020. This can only be achieved by putting sustainability at the core of our strategy. An important part of achieving these goals is to manage our electricity and water use, and to ensure that no non-hazardous waste goes to landfill. The biomass boiler is our latest step on this journey,” said Marquet.

Unilever’s said the success of the biomass boiler will not be the end of environmental efforts at Maydon Wharf; the company is actively looking at the re-use of condensate, heat, water waste and flash steam in its factories, as well as new soap-making technologies that use less energy in production. Further, the company is examining the feasibility of a new drier vacuum and solar power.

Commitment to reduce plastic pollution

At the launch, Marquet also symbolically signed the company’s global commitment to ensuring that all of its plastic packaging will be fully reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025. “This undertaking has been made because of growing concerns about plastic pollution – and because it is the right thing to do. In 2017 we made an industry-leading commitment to ensure that all our plastic packaging is designed to be fully reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025. We will also increase the recycled plastic content in our packaging to 25% by 2025.

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com