



# Quick Brief

A news update from the NBI on its programmes, business leadership and issues on sustainable development.

26 January 2018

## Update on the Circular Economy

This quick brief is an update on the one presented in August 2017, due to a prestigious award presented to GreenCape at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland this week.

The National Business Initiative (NBI) would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to GreenCape for making South Africa proud at the WEF event taking place at Davos in Switzerland! One of GreenCape's programmes, the Western Cape Industrial Symbiosis Programme (WISP), achieved the runner-up award at the prestigious Circulars Award 2018 in the Circular Economy: Public Sector category. The Circulars Award, held on Monday 22 January 2018, recognises outstanding global achievements to help attain a circular economy; whereby waste is actually seen as a resource and is re-used in another purpose, thereby creating tangible socio-economic and environmental benefits.

**GreenCape is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2010 by the Western Cape Government as a Special Purpose Vehicle to support the development of the green economy in the region. The WISP programme was the first industrial symbiosis programme (ISP) established in Africa, with funding from the Western Cape Government and the British High Commission. A free facilitation service bringing together companies in the same region to essentially exchange ones waste to be used as a resource for another company, its success has catalysed the development of similar programmes in other provinces such as Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and demonstration activities in the Eastern Cape. Over the last four years, WISP has diverted more than 27 200 tons of waste from landfill, generated R41.6 million in direct cash benefits for its members and created 140 jobs in the local economy.**

This is an excellent achievement and indeed, shows the vast untapped potential that a circular economy can realise if implemented everywhere. This is particularly needed in developing countries such as ours, whereby the socio-economic benefits of implementing a circular economy mind-set in companies, such as job-creation, are of paramount importance.

The circular economy is one that decouples economic activity from the growing use of finite resources. In South Africa, 90% of all waste is sent to landfill, with little or no re-use or recycling, according to Professor Linda Godfrey, an integrated waste management expert from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

What the WISP Programme shows is that businesses can play a very meaningful role in bringing about a circular, lower carbon and more sustainable economy. Those companies that have been actively implementing sustainability practices for a number of years, should have a tangible competitive advantage and will find it easier to implement new measures.

One approach larger businesses could take right now, to realise circular economy savings is to:

- Firstly train a suitable representative on the WISP approach (NBI can support in this).
- With their supply chain management team, identify suppliers, big and small, operating in the same regions as their operations.
- Identify the appropriate consultation platforms that are already in place that can be used to bring these suppliers together for a workshop.
- At these workshops, facilitate the discussion to identify resources that are currently being disposed of (for e.g. wooden pallets, metal scrap, ash, etc.).
- Create links that align the possible synergies whereby waste from one company could be used as a resource in another company.
- Identify common waste streams that could be recycled collectively, thereby generating a shared revenue stream.
- Put in place the controls and measures to ensure the synergies created are implemented and monitored in order to create the socio-economic and environmental benefits envisaged.

This approach requires commitment to stay the course, something which GreenCape has successfully done and hence rightfully deserve recognition for. Like electric vehicles, setting and achieving science based carbon emission targets, we hope that in the world of our children this circular economy thinking will be the norm and not the exception. It starts here with us...

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**Business Action for Sustainable Growth**

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