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MARCH 2021 SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL

GENERAL

CO₂ EMISSIONS REBOUND TO PRE-LOCKDOWN LEVELS IN DECEMBER – Global CO₂ emissions in December 2020 were higher than CO₂ emissions for the same month in 2019. This should serve as a “stark warning” to policy makers. Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said that Governments must put clean energy policies “at the heart of their [pandemic] recovery packages”, or risk a “substantial rebound of emissions” in 2021.

Source: Forbes dated 2 March 2021

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2021/03/02/global-carbon-emissions-bounce-back-to-pre-pandemic-levels/?sh=780083953873>

EUROPEAN DROUGHTS AND HEATWAVES WORST IN 2000 YEARS- Recent research has found through the analysis of tree rings that the severe droughts and heatwaves experienced in Europe since 2014 have been the worst in over 2000 years. The researchers suggested that global warming is the most likely cause of this. The Guardian reported the following in this regard: “The heatwaves have had devastating consequences...causing thousands of early deaths, destroying crops and igniting forest fires.”

Source: The Guardian dated 15 March 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/15/climate-crisis-recent-european-droughts-worst-in-2000-years>

UK FOUND GUILTY OF AIR POLLUTION: The European Court of Justice has found the UK guilty for consistently breaching toxic NO₂ emission limits. According to the BBC: “The UK has been ordered to pay costs to the European Commission; the amount could run to millions of pounds.”

Source: BBC dated 4 March 2021.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-56282064>

FLOATING SOLAR PANELS IN SINGAPORE – To help do its part in the fight against the global warming crises, and work around the lack of available space, thousands of solar panels have been installed just off the coast of Singapore. The 13 000 panels have the capacity to produce enough energy to power 1500 flats for a year. Shawn Tan, vice president for engineering at Singaporean firm Sunseap Group who completed the project in January said "We hope that this will set a precedent to have more floating projects in the sea in Singapore and neighboring countries."

Source: Interesting Engineering dated 9 March 2021

https://interestingengineering.com/singapore-builds-floating-solar-farms-to-tackle-climate-crisis?_source=newsletter&_campaign=4oLX4MX39Q7g3&_uid=MYer0KwBbO&_h=0c449af79075e17ce54c4618655445d7f4f5cd77&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=mailing&utm_campaign=Newsletter-09-03-2021

PUBLICATIONS

UN REPORT FINDS THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE THE BEST GUARDIANS OF THE FORESTS – A report by UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (Filac) - An opportunity for climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report found the best forest protection was provided by peoples with collective legal titles to their lands.

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations dated 2021

<http://www.fao.org/americas/publicaciones-audio-video/forest-gov-by-indigenous/en/>

NATIONAL

GENERAL

ENVIRONMENTALIST AND HER NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION BEING SUED FOR R 197 MILLION - Greater Kyalami Conservancy (Gekco) and Kristin Kallesen are being sued by Century Property Developments and Riversands Developments for alleged "loss of income" as a result of various objections and appeals raised against development approvals that they allege was to "produce delays", prevent developers from developing the properties and cause financial harm.

Source: Mail and Guardian dated 1 March 2021

<https://mg.co.za/environment/2021-03-01-property-developers-slap-joburg-environmentalist-and-conservancy-with-r197m-lawsuit/>

EMALAHLENI, KLERKSDORP AND BEAUFORT WEST – HAVE OFFICIALLY BEEN DECLARED AS RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ZONES (REDZS) - The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) says "South Africa has committed to a reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions and is working towards a low-emissions, climate-resilient economy and society," and the identification of these development zones is important for the expansion of South Africa's energy mix and reduction of South Africa's coal dependence. The DEFF has confirmed that landowner status will not be affected and landowners will be fully aware of any proposed developments.

Source: Engineering News dated 10 March 2021

<https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/government-sees-new-renewables-zones-helping-to-unlock-low-carbon-energy-mix-2021-03-10>

PRETORIA HIGH COURT RULING HALTS MINING ACTIVITIES IN A STRATEGIC WATER SOURCE – On 23 March 2021, the Pretoria High Court issued an interdict

preventing Uthaka Energy from conducting any mining activities in respect of its proposed Yzermyn coal mine near Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga. The proposed coal mine would fall into one of only 22 areas where more than 50% of South Africa's fresh water originates. There are five other court challenges against permits granted to the proposed mine pending before the High Court.

Source: Centre for Environmental Rights dated 24 March 2021

<https://cer.org.za/news/reprieve-for-mpumalanga-strategic-water-source-area-as-court-halts-start-of-new-coal-mine>

WIND FARM APPROVAL OVERTURNED ON REVIEW – DEFF has refused environmental authorisation for a windfarm in the mountains near Uitenhage citing that the wind farm would pose to greater risk to apex bird species already in danger of extinction. In April 2018 DEFF issued an initial environmental authorisation however five formal appeals were upheld and DEFF refused environmental authorisation for the wind farm on 18 February 2021 – a ruling welcomed by bird conservation groups.

Source: Ground Up dated 24 March 2021

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/watsons-controversial-wind-farm-approval-overturned-on-review/>

WESTERN CAPE GOVERNMENT INVESTS R 70 MILLION TO ASSIST MUNICIPALITIES TO GENERATE OR PROCURE OWN ELECTRICITY: The Western Cape Government has allocated R 70 million of its budget to assist "*municipalities to generate and sell their own power, as well as buy electricity from independent producers.*" It is reported that this is to limit a number of the Western Cape's municipalities' dependence on Eskom as well as the impacts of load shedding.

Source: Business Insider dated 16 March 2021

<https://www.businessinsider.co.za/business/western-cape-invest-in-six-municipalities-to-generate-own-power-2021-3>

RARE FISH WASHING UP ON EASTERN CAPE'S SHORES: A sudden decrease in sea temperatures, from 24 °C to 12°C, led to the deaths of several rare species of fish off the coast of the Eastern Cape.

Source: News24 dated 9 March 2021

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/see-rare-fish-wash-up-along-eastern-cape-beaches-after-sea-temperatures-plummet-20210309>

PUBLICATIONS

OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY POTENTIAL: A new study titled "*Offshore wind energy – South Africa's untapped resource*" published in the Journal of Energy in South Africa has found that "*based on South Africa's annual electricity consumption of 297.8 TWh in 2018, [offshore wind energy] could theoretically supply approximately 15% and 800% of South Africa's annual electricity demand*".

Source: Journal of Energy in Southern Africa dated 30 November 2020.

<https://journals.assaf.org.za/index.php/jesa/article/view/7940>

MEAT CONSUMPTION REGULATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: The Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal has recently published an article titled "*Innovative Regulation of Meat Consumption in South Africa: An Environmental Rights Perspective*".

Source: Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal dated 29 March 2021

<https://journals.assaf.org.za/index.php/per/article/view/7519>

CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

ONLINE COURSES

IMBEWU is offering an **ONLINE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW UPDATE** training course. For more information visit our website: <https://imbewu.co.za/services/> or email: sam@imbewu.co.za.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

VIRTUAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE: 15-16 March 2021 (London)

VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND CHEMICAL ENGINEERING CONFERENCE: 8-9 April 2021 (Athens)

POWER GEN AFRICA: 11 – 13 May 2021 (Cape Town)

IMBEWU'S NEW ONLINE Safety, Health & Environmental (SHE) Legal Register Platform. This new SHE Legal Register offering is contemporary and streamlined for easy access with secure passwords, regular updates, easy navigation, explanations of SHE legislation relevant to your operation, access to a comprehensive searchable SHE legislation database and user-specific functions such as bookmarks.

For more information contact sam@imbewu.co.za or visit <https://imbewu.co.za/she-electronic-legal-registers/>

IMBEWU's environmental note: 5 Ways to Have A Greener Winter <https://sustainability.wisc.edu/5-ways-to-have-a-greener-winter/>

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