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SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2024

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NATIONAL

RAMAPHOSA ANNOUNCES NEW GNU MINISTERIAL CABINET – After nearly two weeks of rigorous negotiations, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the composition of the seventh administration's National Executive, late on 30 June 2024. Ramaphosa said that it took some time to ensure the “stability of the Cabinet,” and negotiations required sufficient time to ensure that the Cabinet best served the country. For the first time in South Africa's democratic history, no single party obtained an outright majority in the general elections, with the incumbent African National Congress (ANC) falling to around 40% of the vote. Therefore, a co-governing agreement labeled as the ‘Government of National Unity’ (GNU) has been agreed to by 11 political parties represented in the National Assembly, including the ANC, Democratic Alliance, Patriotic Alliance and the Inkatha Freedom Party. The President also reconfigured various Cabinets including the newly merged ministries of Electricity and Energy with Kgosientsho Ramokgopa (ANC) appointed as Minister and the new ministry of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, with Gwede Mantashe retaining his ministry from the previous portfolio of Mineral Resources and Energy. Additional shifts in other critical sustainability related ministries include, John Steenhuisen as Minister of the newly established Agriculture ministry (formerly Thoko Didiza (ANC)), Dr. Dion George (DA) as Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (formerly Barbara Creecy (ANC)) and Pemmy Majodina (ANC) as the Minister of Water and Sanitation (formerly Senzo Mchunu (ANC)).

Source: [Business Tech](#) and [SA News](#) dated 30 June 2024

POTENTIAL FOR SA TO ADOPT GREEN BUILDING PRACTICES – Investment services and advisory company, MSCI, recently published its South Africa Green Annual Property Index for 2023 which has revealed that green-certified prime and A-grade office buildings produced a total return of 5.8%, which was 150 basis points above that of non-certified office assets of a similar quality, during 2023. “As tenants increasingly consider their total cost of occupation and utility prices continue to rise, leasing space in an energy efficient green building becomes an important consideration. Additionally, the cost of supplying

backup power to these properties is lower owing to their reduced consumption," says Paul Kollenberg, head of Growthpoint offices asset management. Driving the lower operating costs of these green-certified offices were the significantly lower costs per-square-metre usage of electricity (at 7% lower) and water (at 21% lower), when compared with non-certified offices. "Measuring climate risk in a quantifiable way is moving to the top of the agenda. We have to measure it, show that we are managing it and then rubber stamp it with credible accreditations. This index goes a long way in doing this," says MSCI VP, Eileen Andrew. The Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition published the draft National Building Regulations, dated 3 June 2024, in order to introduce technologically neutral requirements for the energy usage in buildings, including hot water systems. This could indicate a local shift in prioritizing greener, more energy efficient buildings.

Source: [Engineering News dated 27 June 2024](#)

PESTICIDES FOUND IN WESTERN CAPE RIVERS LINKED TO POORER BRAIN FUNCTION IN CHILDREN – Two studies conducted by scientists at Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town, have found certain pesticides, that are banned in Europe, to be present in the Berg, Krom and Hex rivers in the Western Cape throughout the year. Concentrations of these pesticides outside crop-spraying and high-rainfall months indicate the chemicals may also be in the groundwater. Health studies involving more than 1,000 children in these catchment areas have found an association between pesticide exposure and poorer brain function in children. Of the 44 pesticides for which Emma Davies and her team tested, 18 were detected in the Berg River, 13 in the Krom River, and eight in the Hex River. Davies notes that the frequent detection of imidacloprid, a pesticide that attacks the nervous system of insects, in rivers is concerning, as it is banned in the EU due to mounting evidence that it harms pollinating insects such as bees. Additionally, the year-round presence of other pesticides indicates a source other than run-off after agricultural application. Previous studies have also indicated groundwater as a possible source of pesticide pollution. Research into headache severity and neurodevelopment of school children aged 9-16 involved a study of over 1000 children in the Piketberg, Grabouw and Hex River Valley farming areas. The study considered children who self-reported their exposure to pesticides on the farms where they lived and worked with about 50% of the children reporting to have been engaged in activities related to pesticide exposure. The study found that children who indicated they were involved in activities which exposed them to pesticides, might be at a higher risk of suffering from headaches and "lower cognitive performance in the domains of attention, memory and processing speed".

Source: [GroundUp dated 12 June 2024](#)

INTERNATIONAL

NEW TYPE OF PESTICIDE PROMISE SAFETY FOR HUMANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT – U.S. farmers now have a new pesticide for battling against common pests, one that works in an entirely different way from traditional pesticides and that proponents say should be safer for people and the environment. Based on a mechanism called RNA interference (RNAi), the spray targets a vital gene in the Colorado potato beetle (a significant threat to certain crops in the U.S.). The gene target is unique to the pest and its close relatives, which should prevent damage to pollinators and other species. "You can hit the insect you want to kill with precision," says Subba Reddy Palli, an entomologist at the University of Kentucky who published a review last year in *Frontiers in Insect Science*, describing the development of RNA-based pesticides. Marketed as 'Calantha' by the company GreenLight Biosciences, the pesticide won approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in January 2024 after a 4-year review. More RNA-based products are in development and GreenLight has applied for regulatory approval for a pesticide targeting the varroa mite, the main plague of honey bees, which can resist almost all available pesticides. Other companies have similar products in field trials. Researchers at various universities are exploring RNA as a tool to combat Asian citrus psyllids, bark beetles, mosquitoes, and other species. Compared with most of the chemicals currently used, adds Ana Maria Vélez, an insect toxicologist at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, "it's way safer."

Source: [Science dated 27 June 2024](#)

PLASTIC PARTICLES NOW BEING FOUND THROUGHOUT THE HUMAN BODY – Particles of plastic so tiny that they cannot be seen with the naked eye have been found almost everywhere, from the oceans' depths to mountain tops. These plastics are found in the soil, in plants, in animals as well as humans. When

plastic waste is dumped in a landfill or the sea, it breaks down, very slowly. Sunlight and waves cause the surface of the plastic to become brittle, and particles are shed into the environment. Collectively known as “small plastic particles”, they range in size from 5 millimeters or smaller (microplastics) to less than one-thousandth of a millimeter (nanoplastics). Several methods for how these plastic particles enter our bodies include consumption of foods contaminated with small plastic particles, inhalation through the ambient air and absorption through our skin. In recent years, microplastics and nanoplastics have been found in the brains, hearts and lungs of humans as well as in the arteries of people with arterial disease, suggesting they may be a potential risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Earlier this year, Chinese researchers reported that they had found microplastics in human and dog reproductive organs and more recently, an Italian study found microplastics in six out of ten samples of human bodily fluids. A significant concern is that microplastics and nanoplastics might act in a similar way to deadly asbestos fibres. Like asbestos, they are not broken down in the body and can be taken up into cells, killing them and causing the microplastics to be released in the body to damage more cells. One promising area of research involves the use of human placental tissue grown in laboratories. Special artificial placenta tissues, called “trophoblast organoids”, are used for studying how harmful substances cross the placenta and affect embryos. For now, there is no evidence that nanoplastics can cross the placenta into the human embryo.

Source: [The Conversation dated 19 June 2024](#)

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

World Nature Conservation Day – 28 July 2024:

<https://www.oliveboard.in/blog/world-nature-conservation-day/>

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