

South Africans have shown that they have the power during Earth Hour

“Solar geyser could reduce electricity bill by up to 50%”

“South Africans have shown that we have the power during Earth Hour to make a difference when Eskom confirmed last year that we had switched off and achieved a massive, combined 629MW average reduction on our electricity usage”, says Nicolette Pombo-van Zyl, programme director for **Clean Power Africa** and **African Utility Week**. She was speaking in the run-up to this weekend’s global Earth Hour, during which everyone is encouraged to switch off their lights and all other electricity they are using for that hour from 8.30-9.30pm. Last year’s saving was up from 2012, when according to Eskom, energy usage reduced by approximately 402MW during Earth Hour – enough electricity to power Bloemfontein.

Pombo-van Zyl continues: “hopefully enough individuals and businesses will take Earth Hour beyond 29 March and increase the use of energy efficiency tools, change energy consumption habits, and invest in green solutions throughout the year.”

Saving power with solar water heaters

Sarah Ward, of the City of Cape Town’s Energy Efficiency Forum that is organising the City’s Earth Hour festivities at the V&A Waterfront this weekend, agrees: “by installing a solar water heater, the electricity bill of a typical middle income household of four people, should come down by up to 50% per household.”

She says installing solar water geysers will have a very significant impact on electricity consumption: “If we see the number of installations that we are aiming for, we should have a 10% consumption reduction across the whole of Cape Town – that includes businesses, industries and households. It also means a lot of investment in solar water heater companies, the creation of jobs for installation teams.” Sarah is one of several speakers from the City at **African Utility Week** and **Clean Power Africa** where leading providers of renewable energy technology will display their products.

Embracing renewable energy

Two **Clean Power Africa** sponsors, solar experts SMA and First Solar, were recently involved in the installation of a 20 kilowatt (kW) thin film solar photovoltaic (PV) plant at Camphill Village in the Western Cape that will make its dairy one of the first in South Africa to embrace renewable energy. The dairy, which provides employment for intellectually disabled adults, will now use solar electricity for its production of organic milk, cheese and yoghurt products for retail. The construction of the solar installation took only a month and will make the dairy self-sufficient with an uninterrupted power supply which will enable them to utilise the savings in electricity for other projects, repairs and infrastructure.

“We anticipate that this plant will help us save approximately ZAR1.44 million in electricity costs over the next 20 years which can be reinvested in caring for our people, while also contributing significantly to our positioning as a truly sustainable, ecological leader in the region,” says James Sleight, Managing Director at Camphill Village.

First Solar, a global leader in comprehensive solar energy solutions, sponsored the 300 thin film PV panels that power the facility, in addition to making a financial contribution to the project.

“Sunlight is our most abundant energy resource and this project demonstrates just how solar power plants can be scaled to meet very specific energy needs. From dairy farms to mines to utility-scale power plants, solar power has the potential for support sustainable growth and development from the grassroots up,” states Nasim Khan, Vice President of Business Development for First Solar in Africa.

Dr. Günther Häckl, Chief Representative and Vice President Public Affairs at SMA adds: “Camphill Village is an outstanding example of enabling people to gain independence by employing them in a social enterprise. Helping Camphill Village to establish its power supply in support of its principles of enhancing the lives of people in need of services and support for daily living just seemed a logical step for us.”