

Driving sustainability

Navigating the green revolution in logistics and retail

Incorporating green practices into a classic retail supply chain might seem like a tall order, but the rewards go beyond saving the planet. Embracing eco-friendly logistics can slash expenses, boost brand reputation, and open new resource avenues.

Despite the initial daunting nature of the task, South African companies are stepping up and making strides in the right direction towards integrating green logistics into their operations.

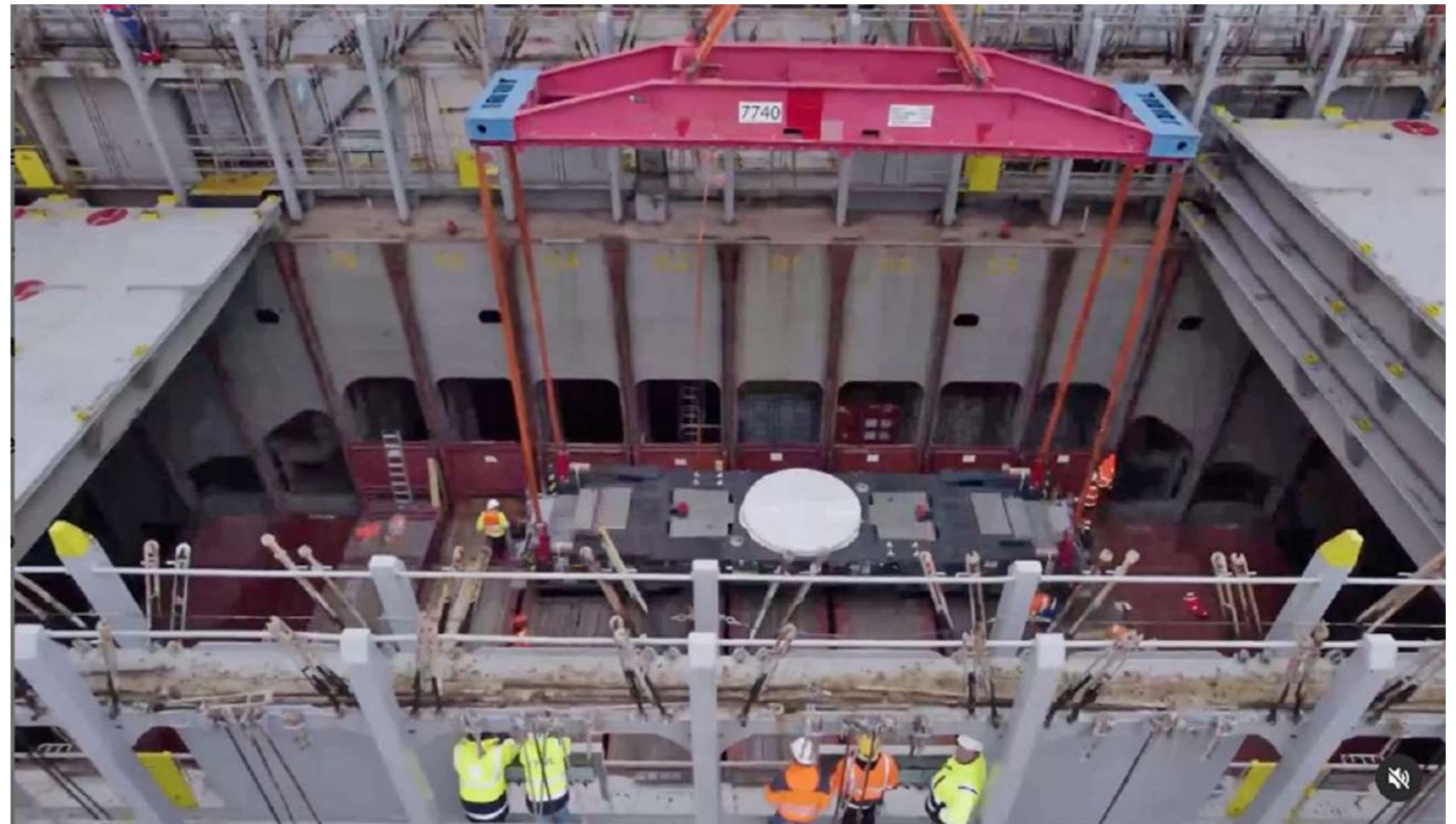


Oliver Naidoo

Oliver Naidoo, Managing Director of JCA Auditors (JCA), says the company has conducted more than 10 000 audits over the last 15 years in South Africa, including

ISO 14001 environment management audits.

“In our experience, we are seeing a noticeable shift in recent years towards greener solutions in the logistics and transport industry, driven by the need to reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact. The increasing demand by investors for environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices initiatives seems to be cascading downstream to all players in the supply chain, including transport operations – which contributes significantly to the overall logistics carbon footprint.”



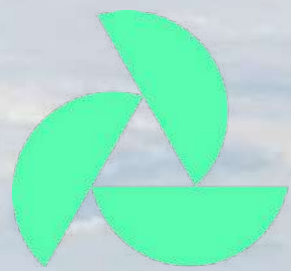
MSCcargo recently transported a 277-tonne telescopic railway crane from Bremerhaven to Baltimore. The crane is a multi-purpose device and will be used for rail laying, rescue services and more. <https://www.msc.com/>

According to Naidoo, companies in the logistics and transport industry are adopting various strategies to reduce their carbon footprint. This includes investing in fuel-efficient vehicles, optimising routes to reduce mileage, and implementing eco-friendly driving practices. Some companies are also exploring alternative fuels, such as biofuels or electric cars, to reduce emissions.



Liesl de Wet

Liesl de Wet, Chairperson of the Road Freight Association's Green Transport Interest Group, explains that significant change can be made with incremental change. “In the transport sector, the biggest impact is fuel emissions and the resultant



argon Supply Chain Solutions



Peter Kerr, Managing Director and founder of Argon Supply Chain Solutions has been working in the SAP and SAP Supply chain solution space for over 20 years. Having been involved in almost all of the SAP Warehouse implementations in South Africa with primary focus on Retail, Peter is able to share some insights on SAP Logistics Solutions and what impact integration has on the solution.

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waste within supply chains. Most transport companies already closely manage fuel usage on their balance sheets from a cost perspective. A massive impact can be made on emissions simply by reducing the inefficiencies around fuel.”

She explains how one transporter managed to use 6% less fuel simply by reducing the idle time of vehicles.

“The use of technology and data to drive efficiency is increasing across the transport and logistics sector. Fuel and vehicle monitoring is becoming common, while onboard vehicle telematics is critical. We are also seeing data being used for route and payload optimisation.”



Abdool Kamdar

Abdool Kamdar, Africa Technical Consultant: Smart Freight Centre (Netherlands) and manager of KDG Logistics’ decarbonisation drive, says fast change is taking place across the logistics and transport space to become greener.

“Companies are responding to market demands to report emissions and have realised it is not as complex as is often made out. For example, to calculate the amount of emissions of a diesel truck, one multiplies the amount of diesel in litres used by 3.24, and the answer is the kilograms of CO₂ emissions.”

He explains that as industries strive to meet customer demands, they’re recognising that by

tracking and reporting CO₂ emissions, they’re cutting them down, enhancing operational efficiency, and boosting profitability in the long run. “A company aiming to reduce emissions by, say, 10% can significantly enhance its profitability by merely optimising fuel consumption to reach its emission targets.”

People make a difference

According to Kamdar, there is currently a clear emphasis on skills development and knowledge acquisition in the road transport sector.

“Simply transporting goods from point A to B is no longer sufficient – understanding the intricate details of the data behind all operations is increasingly vital. This encompasses factors such as distance travelled, time taken, deviations from targets, fuel consumption, and more. Many companies are discovering that significant benefits can be achieved by enhancing these fundamental aspects of their business.”

De Wet highlights the recognised importance of driver training, noting that companies increasingly ensure that those behind the wheel drive optimally and efficiently.



Martin Bailey

Martin Bailey, CEO of Industrial Logistic Systems, says the move to green solutions varies significantly from company to company. But, he notes, opting for greener supply chains is not just a moral imperative anymore but also a strategic necessity for retailers, particularly in the face of growing e-commerce. It enables them to meet consumer expectations, comply with regulations, achieve cost savings, mitigate risks, and enhance their brand reputation.

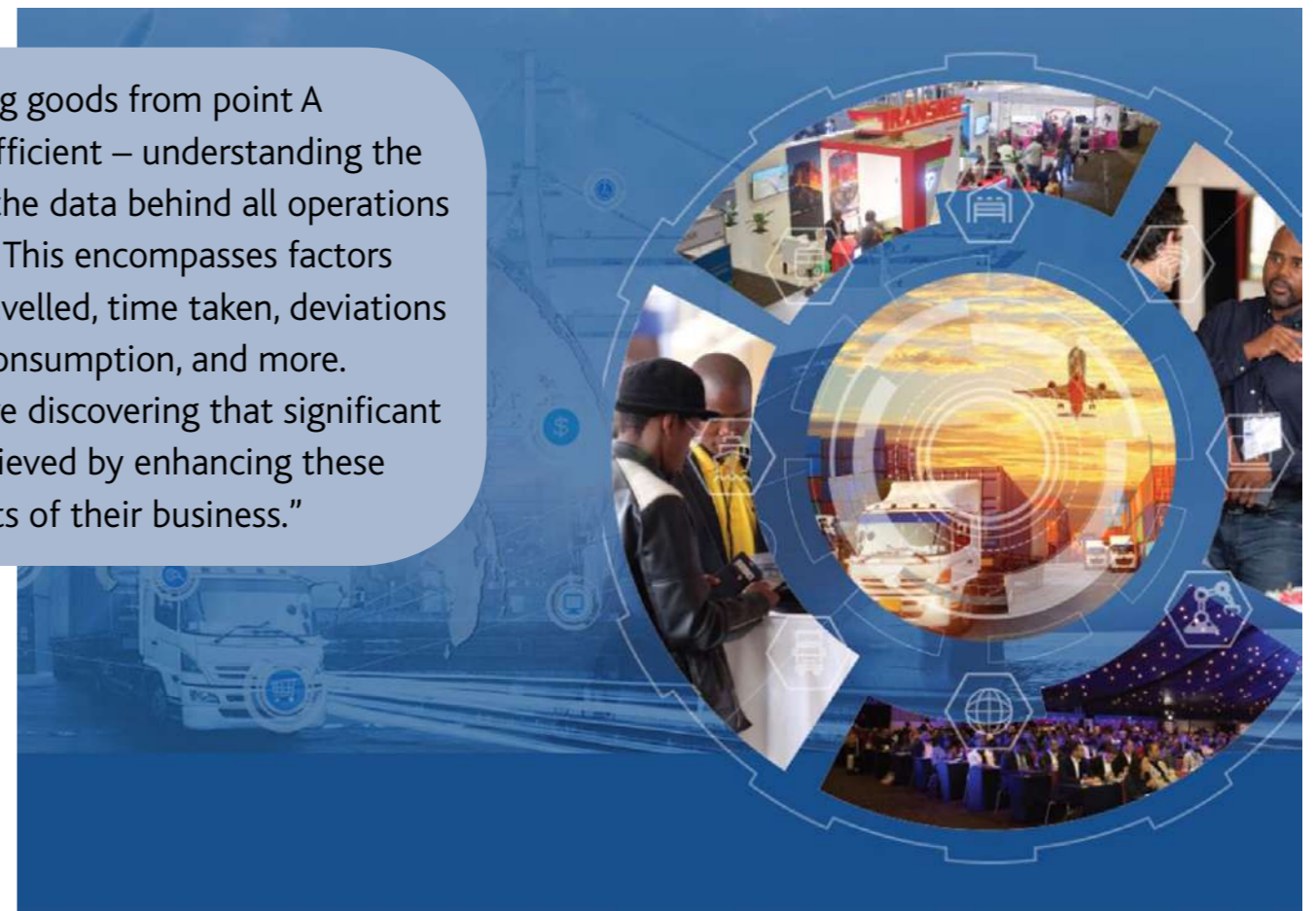


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A PwC report highlights the move towards green, stating that decarbonisation and managing climate risk are critical differentiators as consumers, investors, and regulators demand climate action.



Julie Rosa

“Successful companies are those taking steps to minimise their negative impact on the climate and adapt to avoid adverse climate impacts on their business,” says Julie Rosa, a PwC strategy, sustainability and energy expert.

“The goal is to identify and analyse the risks associated with climate change to inform decision-making, adaptation strategies and risk management plans.”

She says increasingly the focus in sustainability is about shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach.

Making a difference

Naidoo says that innovative technologies are playing a crucial role in making transportation and logistics more sustainable. “This includes using telematics to optimise routes and reduce idle time, as well as adopting software solutions for optimising last-mile delivery. We know there is a need to shift to cleaner energy models or hybrid vehicles, with electric vehicles now coming into the picture. That being said, we still are heavily reliant on internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles

Image by Immagini di Simmisimons, www.canva.com



and will be for many more years, certainly in the heavy bulk commodities sector. Hence, whilst we embrace new technologies and promote the shift to alternate/electric energy, we must also embrace innovative practices to minimise emissions in the current mix of vehicles, the majority of which are diesel-powered. Simple and often overlooked practices such as eco-driving can significantly reduce fuel saving and emissions.”



Ndia Magadagela

Ndia Magadagela, co-founder of Everlectric, says there is a definite increase in the uptake of electric vehicles. “We are seeing more two-wheelers, three-wheelers and even

four-wheelers in operations across the logistics sector servicing the retail industry. More importantly is that the efficiency and profitability of these vehicles are being realised, driving the move to EV.”

She elaborates that the total cost of ownership for using EVs as delivery vehicles is favourable ...

“They are unquestionably more economical to operate, demonstrated to be more efficient and technically reliable. While EV’s are relatively new to South Africa and there is still a long road ahead, the momentum is heading in the right direction.”



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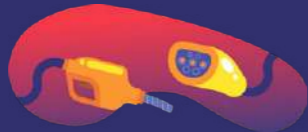
Why electric vehicles are the future



Massive changes from fossil fuel vehicles to electric vehicles are inevitable.

In 2019, 2.2 million electric cars were sold globally and represented only 2.5% of the global car market. In 2021, electric car sales tripled to 6.6 million worldwide and represented 9% of the global car market. Cars with an electrified engine are tipped to account for just under one-fourth of the global market by 2025. It is estimated that pure battery electric vehicles will account for about 7.4 percent of worldwide car sales.

Fossil fuels will not last forever



According to the research, the world will run out of oil in 50 years. Before the resource becomes so scarce and prices skyrocket, the world must look for another more sustainable alternative. Electric vehicles emit lower carbon emissions and are friendly to the environment.

Electric vehicles are cheaper in the long run



For long-run maintenance, electric vehicles are cheaper than fossil fuel cars. Electric cars have many fewer engine parts, so they require less servicing and lower the repair cost. They can even be charged at home with a home charging unit, which costs a bit of money to install, but is still very affordable.

A more comfortable driving experience



The most well-known feature of electric vehicles is that it is quiet. In addition, electric cars also have instant torque, which makes them fun to drive. Moreover, it also has a lower centre of gravity, which provides both driving and safety benefits.

Going electric

Magadagela says that there are examples of operators converting vehicles to electric power across the country.

“We’re even witnessing the emergence of alternatives like gas, and there’s increasing discussion about hydrogen, although it’s not yet widespread in South Africa. Innovations are underway.”



Takealot roll out ten JAC battery-electric delivery trucks. www.engineeringnews.co.za/

She mentions that although heavy vehicles are still on the verge of transition in the urban sector, many operators are using electric one-ton panel vans. These vans are charged daily and employed for deliveries efficiently throughout cities.

One example of this that has been highly successful is Woolworths, which has partnered with Everlectric and DSV to use electric panel vans to deliver online purchases. “The project has been running for the past three years, and there are now more than 40 electric vehicles in Woolworth’s fleet,” says Magadagela. While mostly operational in Cape Town and Gauteng, plans are already in place to extend the roll-out to KwaZulu-Natal.

“The programme was piloted using two electric vehicles only. Over three years of testing proved that electric vehicles are commercially, technically and financially viable in commercial fleets,” she says.



Woolworths’ fleet of 41 electric delivery vehicles.

In 2023, FedEx Express deployed its first 10 electric vehicles in South Africa as part of its ongoing effort to reduce its carbon footprint. FedEx is working towards a goal to transform its entire global pickup and delivery fleet to zero-emission electric vehicles by 2040.

To achieve this, FedEx Express says that 50% of all new vehicles purchased until 2025 will be electric, and from 2030 onward 100% of purchases will be EVs.



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The electric last mile

Nowhere does the use of EVs make more sense than in the last mile of delivery. While South Africa has needed to be more active in adopting EVs, electrifying vehicles for last-mile deliveries could greatly enhance overall efficiency. Additionally, it presents a much more feasible option for retailers offering on-demand deliveries.

Also on the rise is the use of electric motorcycles, says Craig Langton, Group Founder of Hero Motorcycles and Last.Mile.Fast. He continues ...



Craig Langton

“Reducing carbon footprint in South Africa in the on-demand sector starts with understanding what motorcycles can deliver. It is also important to understand what motorcycles are used to perform the delivery. Most motorcycles sold in South Africa still have internal combustion engines and are price point focused. These are not necessarily environmentally friendly or focused on consuming fewer parts and oils.”

Image by Comzeal, www.canva.com



But, says Langton, there is increasing recognition that choosing an ESG-focused motorcycle has real benefits. “Not only do they offer the lowest environmental impact, but also higher profits. As the e-commerce sector continues to grow, more South Africans are going to demand on-demand deliveries, meaning more efficient on-demand vehicles will be required to service the sector.”

Langton says on-demand deliveries are growing at scale to billions of dollars. He says it will become essential for retailers to opt for scooters and motorcycles that offer the necessary Euro 5 certifications and have proof of conformity with sustainable and guaranteed battery charging systems, battery performance, and essential safety features.

Tackling the challenges

Magadagela asserts that EVs are undoubtedly here to stay and will see increasing use.

“However, there are still hurdles to overcome, with the primary challenge being the mindset surrounding their adoption. Many users are unfamiliar with this new product, which emphasises the need for a shift in perspective,” she explains.

“Understanding how to integrate these vehicles into one’s operations seamlessly is crucial, considering factors like charging logistics and minimising business disruptions. Moreover, electricity challenges in South Africa, including ongoing load shedding, further underscore the importance of managing power usage effectively.”

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She also highlights the cost barrier, noting that EVs still face higher import duties than

traditional ICE vehicles. "As a result, the upfront costs of EVs are typically higher, making them less accessible to some businesses than ICE vehicles."

According to JCA's Oliver Naidoo, many of the challenges around green logistics relate to infrastructure constraints, lack of adequate financing, high initial capital costs and stakeholder perceptions. "Other obstacles other than cost, for example, in the drive to embrace EVs, include the limited charging infrastructure across the country and range anxiety. The availability of charging stations, especially outside major urban areas, is limited, which can deter potential EV buyers, while there are still concerns about EVs' limited driving range. Coupled with the limited availability of charging stations, potential buyers can be discouraged from switching to electric," he says.

Like Magadagela, he notes that grid capacity is another ongoing consideration. "The increased adoption of EVs could strain the existing electricity grid, especially during peak charging times, unless infrastructure is upgraded. The current load shedding scenario compounds the grid capacity constraints, with some suggesting that this makes the widespread adoption of EVs an impossibility in the foreseeable future."



Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park. The 900MW sixth phase, which will use photovoltaic solar panels, will become operational in stages between 2025 and 2027. www.khaleejtimes.com

Collaboration and partnerships drive change

Most experts agree that collaboration and partnership are necessary to achieve sustainability goals.

"We cannot achieve change in isolation," says De Wet. "We have to work together as industry or we will never see the deep emission reduction required to affect long-term change. Part of that collaboration is client partnerships."

Kamdar agrees, emphasising the potential of collaboration, especially regarding sustainability goals when objectives are aligned. "Achieving success is feasible when cargo owners and operators establish synergies. Matching load sizes with vehicle capacities, for example, can lead to

a more environmentally friendly operation. Open communication between supply chain partners and customers is crucial for future progress."

Furthermore, collaboration is just as important to improve reverse logistics, ensuring that trucks do not return empty, thus maximising efficiency and reducing unnecessary emissions.

Magadagela highlights another advantage of collaboration: the opportunity to share knowledge. "Partnerships often involve entities that have experience with similar projects and understand how to mitigate the risks associated with transitioning to greener mobility," she explains.





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“They recognise the importance of capturing as much data as possible before investing capital in a solution. We’ve witnessed significant successes in partnerships due to this shared understanding and approach.”

According to Chule Qalase, Senior Manager: CSR & Sustainability at ISUZU Motors South Africa, collaborative partnerships within the supply chain play a pivotal role in enabling companies to attain their sustainability objectives through the facilitation of knowledge-sharing, collaborative investments in green technologies, and concerted efforts to develop and implement more sustainable supply chain practices. Qalase says ...



Chule Qalase

“These partnerships can extend beyond individual organisations, involving suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and customers. By fostering a comprehensive network focused on sustainability, companies can collectively address complex challenges associated with environmental impact.”

“This interconnected approach allows for the pooling of resources, expertise, and innovative solutions, ultimately creating a synergistic effect that accelerates the adoption of sustainable practices throughout the supply chain. Through shared commitment and collaboration, the collective impact of these efforts will drive meaningful progress towards a more sustainable and responsible future for the industry.”



The MSC Capella in Puerto Talcahuano, Chile. The vessel – with a length of 366.45 m, a beam of 48.20 m and a capacity of 13 119 TEUs – became the largest ship ever to call in on San Vicente International Terminal (SVTI). Photo courtesy of www.msc.com/

Aligning with consumer preferences for sustainability goes beyond the product itself

Meeting consumer demand

Consumer preferences and demands for sustainability significantly influence decision-making in the retail and supermarket sectors. Companies are increasingly adopting eco-friendly transportation and storage solutions to align with consumer expectations and enhance their brand reputation in the market, explains Qalase.

“Additionally, companies in the retail and supermarket sectors recognise that aligning with consumer preferences for sustainability goes beyond the product itself. It extends to the entire supply chain, including transportation and storage practices. To meet the growing demand for eco-conscious choices, businesses invest in sustainable

packaging materials, optimise logistics to reduce carbon footprints, and implement energy-efficient storage solutions.”

“This strategic alignment with consumer values establishes a sense of corporate responsibility, fostering loyalty and trust among environmentally conscious consumers. As sustainability continues to drive consumer decision-making, businesses must integrate environmentally friendly practices into every facet of their operations to remain competitive and socially responsible.”

A challenge that persists is the high cost associated with green goods. “There’s a definite perception that green products come with a higher price tag, and unfortunately, that’s



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often the reality,” explains De Wet. “In an economy facing constraints where consumer spending is under pressure, these products can sometimes be sidelined, which isn’t conducive to overall sustainability. Cost competitiveness must be prioritised, and we must actively strive to change this perception to encourage greater adoption of green products.”

Magadagela observes that consumers are now more aware of ESG responsibilities than ever, placing pressure on retailers to offer products with a lower carbon footprint. “We’re witnessing an increase in inquiries regarding packaging, transportation, and overall sustainability,” she notes. “This shift in consumer demand will inevitably drive players in the retail sector to insist on more sustainable solutions from their service providers.”

Kamder highlights that this trend is already noticeable in the transport sector, where significant pressure for sustainability originates from large brand owners seeking increased reporting and accountability from transporters. “Looking ahead, there’s no question that purchasing decisions will increasingly consider the embedded CO₂ profile of a product,” he predicts. “Arguments favouring local products over imports and advocating against buying out-of-season items will become more prominent.”

He emphasises that this rapidly evolving landscape requires retailers and their logistics service providers to stay constantly updated on emerging trends.



“The most agile and forward-thinking retailers are already aligning themselves with customer preferences, which will become a significant competitive advantage over time. In the transport sector, companies willing to build robust data sets and cultivate knowledge as integral parts of their institutional resources within their management teams while ensuring they have the right skills in place will find themselves forging ahead,” he says.

According to Kamder, the growing opportunities to experiment with new initiatives, ongoing innovation, and the development of technologies are propelling the retail sector and its supply chain service providers towards a significantly more sustainable future.

“Those capable of navigating short-term complexities and integrating resilience into their business models will gain a competitive edge, not only in reducing CO₂ emissions but also in overall business sustainability.”

Concept by Elnur, www.canva.com



Standards across the supply chain

According to Oliver, standards will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in the future as companies are held accountable to specific benchmarks.

“ISO 14001 is the internationally recognised standard for environmental management. At the heart of this standard is the commitment to the reduction of pollution and responsible consumption of energy. This standard requires a business to identify all aspects of the business that impact the environment. These include resource consumption, waste generation, emissions monitoring, effluent management and other contributory factors,” he says.

“Based on this environmental aspect and impact analysis, one must implement environmental programmes that monitor key performance indicators (KPIs).”



The development of a new distribution centre – Twiga, Nairobi, Kenya.

In today's business landscape, the pursuit of sustainability is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity. While the notion of exclusively using organic and biodegradable products is linked to sustainability, embracing resource consciousness and optimising utilisation, can drive significant progress towards a sustainable future.

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) retail operates on thin profit margins and high volumes, making efficiency paramount. Maximising efficiency across distribution centres and networks is crucial for building sustainable operations. Supply chain efficiency is pivotal for retail success, making

Optimising retail operations for a sustainable supply chain


those efficiencies sustainable is essential. Cultivating a culture of continuous improvement at each stage of the value chain empowers business to reduce operational expenses, minimise waste, and enhance efficiency. A sustainable supply chain yields substantial cost savings through process optimisation, energy conservation, and waste reduction.

In collaboration with Pick 'n Pay, Relog was able to design a solution that uses rainwater to cool compressors in refrigeration plants, subsequently repurposing the now warm water to clean returnable equipment. This initiative reduces waste disposal, minimises chemical usage, and cuts energy consumption.

Relog's core focus on operational efficiency involves optimising internal processes and layouts to maximise productivity while minimising labour and energy inputs. Through continuous observation, analysis, and adaptation, coupled with data-driven insights, Relog spearheads transformative ventures like "Relnfer."

Relnfer, Relog's latest innovation, harnesses real-time transactional analysis, facilitating ongoing operational optimisation. By providing businesses with the means to continuously measure, adapt, and optimise processes, Relnfer empowers them to achieve a lean, sustainable supply chain with minimal waste and redundancy.

A sustainable supply chain goes beyond the ecological aspect. By integrating sustainability into their supply chains, businesses not only affirm their commitment to environmental responsibility but also position themselves to reduce operational costs, meet or exceed regulatory standards, and cultivate a positive brand image.

This approach fosters a culture of innovation, allowing companies to adapt to evolving market trends while demonstrating leadership in sustainability. Ultimately, this builds resilience, enabling businesses to thrive in a dynamic and ever-changing business landscape, securing long-term success and customer trust. 



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“In a transport business, one would need to develop a calculation methodology for determining the quantity of carbon dioxide emissions arising from the transport operations. The calculation should report the kilograms of CO₂ per ton of payload transported and would need to consider the diesel volumes, tonnage and vehicle emissions factor (e.g. Euro 5). The ISO 14083 standard provides detailed guidance on calculating carbon emissions for various supply chain stakeholders.”

De Wet says the ISO 14038 is a crucial tool for measuring logistics emissions establishing a common methodology. “This standard facilitates best practices and benchmarking, while the Global Logistics Emissions Council (GLEC) framework serves as another valuable tool to help companies

“A lot of misinformation is circulating about green transport solutions, so we must demystify emissions in the transport sector. Knowledge dissemination is a fundamental driver in promoting greener practices.”

The experts agree that the journey towards greener logistics and transportation is both a challenge and an opportunity. “Companies across various sectors, from retail to transport, increasingly recognise the importance of sustainability in their operations. Collaborative efforts, innovative technologies, and a shift towards consumer-driven demand are driving this transformation,” says Magadagela.

While challenges such as high costs and infrastructure limitations persist, concerted efforts are

assess if they are heading in the right direction.”

“While there aren’t many companies currently reporting to GLEC’s standard, significant efforts are underway to change this,” notes Kamder. “The first step is understanding what GLEC entails and how implementing these standards and frameworks can benefit one’s business in the long run. Getting it right hinges on credible information – crucial for retailers and their supply chain service providers.”

REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT!

Image by by Dream Bird Designs, www.canva.com

being made to overcome these obstacles. Standards like ISO 14001 and ISO 14038 and frameworks like GLEC provide valuable guidance and benchmarks for companies navigating the path towards sustainability, says Naidoo.

According to Kamder, as businesses continue to evolve and adapt to meet the demands of a changing world, integrating eco-friendly practices into supply chains will benefit the environment and contribute to long-term profitability and competitiveness. He says ...

“By embracing these changes and working together towards a common goal, the future of logistics and transportation can be both sustainable and prosperous.”



Catherine Larkin is a communication and marketing professional, specialising in Logistics, Transport and Supply Chain. Her company, CVLC Communication, is a corporate public relations, communication, marketing and events consultancy. Its services range from full secretariat support, project management and administration.



A Greener Tomorrow is **VITAL**

Since its founding in 1999, Vital Distribution Solutions has solidified its reputation as a reliable supplier of comprehensive logistics services to each of the major industry sectors in Southern Africa.

Vital Distribution Solutions is far from being just another transport company among many, with a fleet of over 600 vehicles ranging from 1 Ton “Bakkies” to Super-link trailer combinations. Vital offers a national service in South Africa, with daily deliveries between main centres, such as Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg. Vital Distribution Solutions has worked to build partnerships with its clientele that are based on integrity ever since it was founded. The hands-on management team and dedicated staff, with top management constantly involved with the business and easily reachable, are keys to its success.

Vital takes the responsibility for a reduction in carbon emissions and switching to more sustainable transportation systems seriously. Vital set its environmental strategy in 2018 and updates this environmental strategy annually measuring its performance against goals for a sustained reduction of carbon emissions.

Vital seeks to accomplish this by concentrating on important long-term strategies, addressing the full value chain, by utilising a variety of business intelligence tools. This implies that the entire transportation life cycle is examined, through building close working relationships with

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the OEM, rigorous route planning and optimisation, and exploring alternative means of green transport.

Vital Distribution Solutions has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable transport by investing in industry leading transport management software and establishing its 24/7 operational control tower.

This, together with ensuring continued focus on fuel-efficient vehicles, creates a targeted advantage in terms of daily measurements and ensures that every aspect of business operations is continuously controlled and enhanced.

In addition, Vital actively fosters a culture of mindfulness among staff members by promoting sustainable environmental development initiatives and holding monthly environmental awareness campaigns.

According to Minca Worsley, Compliance Officer of Vital Distribution Solutions the primary objective moving forward is to further reduce inefficiencies, optimising available resources and offering clients an integrated, sustainable business approach that establishes environmental compliance as a non-negotiable and contributes to the reality of a greener tomorrow.

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