Massmart measures its **carbon footprint**

Massmart's environmental policy recognises the link between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. The group also recognises that its retail distribution activities have an impact on the environment. That's why Massmart is measuring its carbon footprint - it's the first step towards minimising the group's negative environmental impact.

Before much was understood about the environment and man's impact on it, industries operated in whatever way was most costeffective and seemingly practical. It was economy first, ecology second. Today, we know that years of environmental damage have caused carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from a variety of man-made sources to build up in the atmosphere. This has created an atmospheric layer that traps heat from the sun close to earth's surface, warming it up and keeping it that way. The rise in the planet's surface temperature is already affecting weather patterns, pushing sea levels higher along coastlines and melting ice masses at both poles.

Some of the catastrophic results of climate change scientists are anticipating include worldwide animal and plant species loss, destruction of natural biodiversity and the effects of vector-borne diseases like malaria being felt by more communities.

Massmart joins the CDP

To slow down further rapid escalation in earth's surface temperature, governments and the private sector are examining the environmental damage they could be causing. Launched in South Africa last year, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) encourages information sharing about carbon emission levels among businesses. It also acts as a platform for iscussion on how best to reduce emissions along various channels. When the call was sounded to join the CDP at its launched in outh Africa last year, Massmart's answer was a resounding 'yes'. Measuring the group's carbon footprint, then, was the next logical step.

Early indications: Massmart compares well

Compared to other higher impact sectors, for example mining or manufacturing, retailers' carbon emission levels are usually low. In Massmart's case, initial indications are that the group is well within the range of global norms. This suggests the group's drive towards saving electricity throughout its operations is bearing fruit, an increasingly important advantage given the rising cost of electricity in South Africa.

On average, Massmart uses 247kW of power per square metre of operational space per year. The typical non-food retailer in the European Union uses 300kW. The most energy efficient of the European non-food retailers use 230kW. Although a retailer and wholesaler of household goods including food, Massmart refrigeration in stores is modest and this has also helped the group compare well to international energy consumption benchmarks. Massmart's measuring of its carbon footprint will lead to a better understanding of its consumption profile. Massmart's environmentalist, Lynton Burger from SustBrands, says they've completed Massmart's first carbon audit and agrees that having a good benchmark is important to measure progress in energy savings going forward. "Although already within the range of international best practice," says Burger, "the group is looking to step up energy efficiency efforts to cut costs and minimise environmental impact across its operations". ■

Everyone can help reduce energy consumption

The strain on local energy supplies felt recently by South Africans has raised awareness of how each individual's usage can affect availability. To assist national energy supplier Eskom in avoiding planned and unplanned power outages, every South African can take action.

Try these energy saving tips:

1. Switch to Compact Florescent Lamp (CFL) bulbs for light fittings.
2. Turn off TVs, hi-fis and DVD players rather than leaving them on stand-by mode (stand-by runs at 50% of normal power).
3. Use light coloured, opaque curtains and blinds to regulate heat coming into and out of your home.
4. Seal gaps around windows and doors.
5. Insulate hot water pipes, turn off your geyser(s) during the day and use a geyser blanket to reduce geyser running time.
6. Lay insulation in your roof and your home will be 10% cooler in summer and 5% warmer in winter.

For more energy consumption reducing ideas go to www.eskom.co.za