

IRP delayed again

The South African Wind Energy Association (Sawea) is disappointed that Cabinet has once again failed to approve the 2019 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) update, especially considering the critical role it plays to achieve the National Development Plan (NDP) benchmarks.



Ntombifuthi Ntuli, CEO of Sawea

The NDP and its 14 outcomes, as released in August 2012, is designed as a blueprint to grow the economy, eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. More specifically it calls for improving energy infrastructure in a sustainable way, increasing investments in energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions by diversifying the energy mix and procuring at least 20GW of renewable energy by the stated deadline. Additionally, the plan accentuates the revision of the national electrification plan to ensure 90% grid access by 2030 with the balance met through quality off-grid technologies, says Ntombifuthi Ntuli, CEO of Sawea.

Whilst the introduction of renewable energy into the electricity system can be traced back as far as December 1998, with the White Paper on Energy Policy, which articulated the objective to stimulate the introduction of renewable energy sources into the energy mix, the birth of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REI4P) is directly linked to the NDP.

“The 2010 IRP was launched with the aim of developing power projects that would add renewable energy into our power system by 2030 and as a direct result of the NDP’s outcomes,” says Ntuli.

Green economy

The sector is on track to deliver on the 2030 goal to connect 20GW of renewable power to the grid, considering that just over 6,2GW of renewable power has been procured to date. “The simple answer is yes, we are on track to achieve this. The latest IRP draft, which was said to be tabled at Nedlac, made a provision for 9,980MW of wind energy and 7,474MW of solar PV, which makes up a total of over 17,5GW of new capacity of renewable power by 2030. So, if you add this to the already procured power we will have well over 20 GW of renewable energy by 2030,” Ntuli says.

Of the list of outcomes that need to be realised at the end of the implementation period of the NDP, a number of them speak directly or indirectly to implementation of renewable energy or the green economy. Obviously, Outcome 6, which looks to creating an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network is where the green economy is positioned to make the biggest contribution.

However, the renewable energy sector is also positioned to contribute to Outcome 10 in a meaningful way, namely the protecting and enhancing of our environmental assets and natural resources. The renewable energy sector is achieving this by providing clean energy and offsetting the need to use environmentally unfriendly energy sources such as coal.

Water savings

Additionally, through the government's REI4P, water savings of 42.8-million kilolitres has been realised from inception until the end of March 2019 as well as a 36.2 Mtons CO2 equivalent emissions reduction (19.4 Mtons CO2 from wind projects). These are very tangible achievements.

With the energy industry being the biggest driver of the South African economy, it makes sense that the sector provides the lever for existing and new green jobs, which speaks to two of the key NDP outcomes. The wind energy industry employs South African's across a range of skills levels and creates the measure of 'meaningful employment'.

"We look beyond the concept of a 'job', which doesn't capture all that is required for a successful development-oriented power sector transition. Sustainability of any one particular job, the working conditions and the level of contractual security provide key aspects," says Ntuli.

The 22 wind energy projects that have successfully reached commercial operations, have reported 1,996 job years, this is in addition to the 32,140 job years that are expected to be created over the operational life span of the full wind portfolio

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