

SAISC event addresses challenges key to sectors of the steel industry

The Southern African Institute of Steel Construction (SAISC) recently held a networking session in Johannesburg with the discussion centred on some of the challenges and opportunities in the industry.



Amanuel Gebremeskel, SAISC CEO and Adam Oldfield, director and structural Engineer, Cousins Steel International

SAISC CEO Amanuel Gebremeskel highlighted the importance of ongoing research and innovative 'new thinking' with a brief overview of new research from the United Kingdom's University of Birmingham, which offers the potential to reduce steelmaking carbon emissions by 90% through devising a so-called 'closed loop' carbon recycling system as an adaptation for existing blast furnaces.

"This incredibly groundbreaking and exciting development - which entailed significant research - reflects the increasing importance of being able to develop a greener and more environmentally-friendly steel industry," he noted.

Challenges posed to different sectors

Gebremeskel posed a series of challenges key to different sectors of the local steel industry, as follows:

For suppliers and merchants: How best to deal with the quality of the steel material on offer, as well as the 'internationalisation' of the industry, and the need to follow business procedures as outlined by global parameters, specifications and compliance.

For fabricators and erectors: How to include technical capability in the

fabrication of steel as a value-add.

Gebremeskel also shared updates from the institute on a number of different initiatives, including the relaunch of its 'Blue Book' via a digital platform.

"Working on a digital platform will offer a more interactive resource, which will address some of the challenges experienced by different sectors of the industry," he explained.



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Engagement and training focus

Early engagement with various potential stakeholders, both up and down the steel value chain, was an important topic raised by a number of delegates. It was noted that changing traditional, more linear ways of operating could play a significant role in dealing with the challenges posed by the availability of steel.

"In addition, increased stakeholder engagement at project inception and a focus on training throughout the steel value chain

could also assist with alleviating pressures. The same is true of education and training - it is a vital part of ensuring the ongoing success of the steel industry, across the board and at all levels," noted Adam Oldfield, director and structural engineer at Cousins Steel International and a new board member of the institute.

"I believe that training can play a significant role in being more cost-effective and allowing for a more considered approach to steel construction issues, wherever one is in the steel value chain. By ensuring that the professional team is communicating with the fabricators, who in turn are aligned to merchants, the flexibility in design approach can only benefit all parties."

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