

Billions of rand being tossed by dumping waste in landfills

By [Tony Carnie](#)

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SA is throwing away about R148bn into a big hole every year by dumping almost 90% of its waste stream into municipal landfill dumps.



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This is the approximate monetary value of the "waste materials" dumped by households and industry into landfills and other disposal sites, according to Council for Scientific and Industrial Research senior scientist and waste researcher Linda Godfrey.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum meeting in Durban on Thursday, 4 May, Godfrey said about 51% of the country's paper and packaging waste stream was now recycled, but SA was still far behind several countries in recycling, reusing, repairing or repurposing natural resources.

About 90% of the country's overall waste stream was still ending up in landfills, she said - even though studies suggested that this was tantamount to dumping R148bn worth of resources "into holes in the ground" every year.

Godfrey's comments follow an agreement signed by the EU and SA in September 2016, which focuses on promoting a

"circular economy".

Unlike a linear economy, where large volumes of materials were dumped at the end of the production cycle, the circular economy is an economic model that aims to minimise resource input and waste generation.

But Godfrey warned that SA had to get the basics right before adopting models from Europe.

"We don't even have separation of wastes at source yet," she said, leading to valuable resources being lost or contaminated as different waste streams were not separated at the household or industry level.

Environment Minister Edna Molewa said at the seminar that the circular economy model was gaining attention worldwide as a way to ameliorate consumption models based on continuous growth.

By creating a closed-loop production system, it was possible to achieve "a better balance and harmony between the economy, environment and society", the minister said.

Source: Business Day

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