

stainless steel

the journal of the southern africa stainless steel development association



ISSUE 3
2026

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Contents

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 1 | Industry Perspective
Turning Protection into Production | 24 | Demand Driver
R1bn Food-Processing Investment Could Unlock 2000 t Stainless Steel Demand |
| 5 | GPS Roundup
Market Intelligence to Boost Business Growth | 28 | Demand Driver
R156bn Water Pipeline Could Drive New Stainless Steel Demand |
| 8 | Sassda News
Sassda Opens Global OEM Supply Chain to Local Stainless Steel Fabricators | 31 | Africa Market Intelligence
Zimbabwe's Industrial Reset: New Growth Frontier for Stainless Steel |
| 9 | Sassda News
Sassda Builds Data-Driven Case to Defend SA's Hollowware Industry | 34 | Sassda News
Sassda Consultancy Turns Stainless Steel Data into Industry Action |
| 11 | State of the Stainless Steel Nation
Protection Buys Time But Demand Will Determine the Future | 35 | Sassda News
KZN Stainless Steel Industry Proves it Has Drive |
| 14 | Professional Profile
Closing the Loop: Skills, Sustainability & Stainless Steel's Future | 37 | Obituary
Memoriam: Tom Rice - Farewell to a Giant of the Industry |
| 17 | Technical Case Study
Straight First Time: How Welding Planning Prevents Costly Distortion | 38 | Obituary
Memoriam: Les Midgley: Builder, Entrepreneur, Adventurer & Gentleman |
| 20 | Technical Case Study
Before the Arc Strikes: How to Predict and Control Stainless Steel Weld Shrinkage | | |

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Turning Protection into Production

This issue of Sassda Stainless Steel Magazine reflects an industry at a critical point. Rising imports, weak domestic demand, infrastructure delays and persistent cost pressures are testing the resilience of local manufacturers. Yet the articles in these pages also demonstrate that focused action can rebuild demand, strengthen local supply chains and create new opportunities for our members.

The introduction of tariffs and safeguard measures recognises the seriousness of the pressures facing the broader steel value chain. These interventions can provide valuable breathing space, but they cannot generate sustainable growth on their own. Protection must be accompanied by infrastructure delivery, effective localisation, competitive energy and logistics, and a far stronger pipeline of work for local producers and fabricators.

For Sassda, this means moving beyond broad calls for support and developing the evidence, technical insight and industry connections required to achieve practical results.

As highlighted in this issue, our analysis of the stainless steel hollowware market is a good example. We are combining import volumes and declared customs values with retail prices, product specifications, material grades and local manufacturing capability. This will help us determine whether imported products are entering South Africa at commercially realistic values and whether they comply with local requirements.

Importantly, the objective is not indiscriminate protection. It is to establish a credible, evidence-based case for targeted intervention where there are signs of dumping, misdeclaration, noncompliance or unfair competition.

Reliable market intelligence is becoming increasingly important across the sector. Through Sassda's consultancy arm, we aim to create a specialist information hub that helps companies understand material flows, regional demand, import trends and changing market opportunities. Better information strengthens decision-making, whether a company is considering an investment, entering a new market or engaging with trade authorities.

This edition also demonstrates how Sassda is working to translate localisation from policy into production. The nomination of Fabrinox and the National Stainless Steel Centre as potential suppliers to a German packaging equipment manufacturer shows what can happen when international requirements are matched with capable South African companies.

Our technical support has also helped an American company replace an unusual material specification with locally available lean duplex stainless steel, enabling components to be manufactured in South Africa. These may begin as individual projects, but they can create activity across the value chain and establish pathways into global supply networks.

South Africa still possesses substantial stainless steel expertise and manufacturing capability. However, that capacity cannot be sustained without demand, investment and a fair operating environment.



The challenge now is to turn the current window of protection into a platform for production. As the stories in this issue show, Sassda's role is not only to represent its members, but to provide the intelligence, technical support and connections that help convert industry challenges into tangible commercial opportunities.

Enjoy the read!

Michel Basson, Sassda Executive Director

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Market Intelligence to Boost Business Growth

Welcome to the highlights edition of the Sassda GPS eNewsletter, your go-to source for key developments shaping South Africa's business, industrial, and economic landscape. Each month we distribute this popular market intelligence aggregator to an exclusive database of members and associates. This selection of the best articles from the last quarter, aims to extend access to this quality content by prioritising the top stories from the latest issues...



Smarter procurement could rebuild the industrial base

Calls for a more deliberate procurement strategy reflect a growing recognition that public spending can do more than acquire goods and services. It can help sustain factories, deepen supply chains and build technical capability. For Sassda members, clearer local-content rules and better visibility of future demand would support investment in equipment, people and certification. The challenge is to balance localisation with competitiveness, quality and delivery, ensuring that procurement creates durable industrial capacity rather than short-term compliance....

[Read more](#)



Toyota's R10.4bn Hilux investment reinforces manufacturing confidence

Toyota South Africa's R10.4-billion investment in ninth-generation Hilux production demonstrates the scale of industrial activity that can be anchored locally through export competitiveness, supplier development and long-term investment. The programme extends beyond a new vehicle model: it supports production capability across a broad component ecosystem. It also offers a useful benchmark for other sectors seeking to deepen localisation while maintaining the quality, productivity and technical standards required in global markets....

[Read more](#)

Electricity capacity set to more than double

South Africa's long-term electricity plan envisages more than doubling generation capacity through a mix of renewables, storage, gas and nuclear power. The scale of the proposed build-out points to sustained demand across generation, transmission and grid infrastructure. Stainless steel has applications throughout this value chain, from corrosion-resistant equipment and piping to specialised components used in harsh operating environments. Delivery will, however, depend on grid expansion, investment certainty and the ability to execute projects at pace....

[Read more](#)





New Development Bank backs urban infrastructure

The New Development Bank has approved financing of up to \$1-billion for infrastructure in South Africa's major urban centres. Investment in water, sanitation, waste management and municipal services has direct relevance for stainless steel suppliers, particularly where corrosion resistance and long service life are critical. The funding is encouraging, but its industrial impact will depend on municipal capacity, sound project preparation and procurement models that give competitive local manufacturers a meaningful opportunity to participate....[Read more](#)

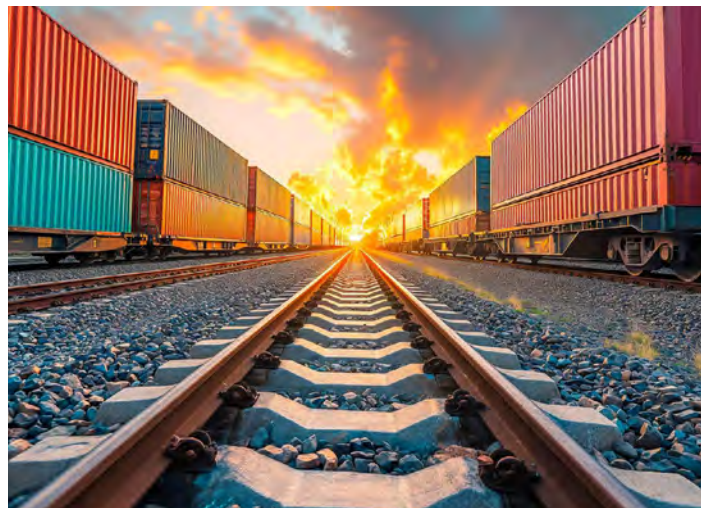
Small modular reactors enter South Africa's nuclear conversation

Growing interest in small modular reactors is widening the discussion around South Africa's future electricity mix. SMRs are promoted as a scalable source of dependable, low-carbon power, although financing, regulation, localisation and delivery timeframes remain decisive considerations. Nuclear projects are particularly relevant to stainless steel because reactor systems, pressure vessels, piping and safety-critical equipment require materials capable of performing reliably in demanding environments. A credible programme could therefore support highly specialised local manufacturing....[Watch here](#)



Transnet outlines R129.1bn capital programme & procurement reset

Transnet plans to spend R129.1-billion over five years, with R116-billion directed towards maintaining reliability and protecting existing freight volumes. At the same time, the group is tightening procurement controls to prevent overcharging and reduce unnecessary intermediaries. This combination could open a substantial market for manufacturers that can supply directly, meet demanding technical specifications and demonstrate value. It also strengthens the case for rebuilding local production capacity around the country's logistics infrastructure....[Read more](#)



R1-trillion infrastructure drive gathers pace

South Africa's proposed R1-trillion infrastructure programme could provide a major demand stimulus across transport, energy, water and public infrastructure. These are all markets in which stainless steel's corrosion resistance, durability and low lifecycle cost can deliver long-term value. The opportunity for local suppliers will depend on projects moving from announcement to implementation, supported by realistic budgets, transparent procurement and greater certainty around the construction pipeline....[Read more](#)



Transnet completes R4bn Saldanha terminal investment

Transnet's completion of a R4-billion investment programme at the Saldanha Iron Ore Terminal is an important step towards restoring the reliability of South Africa's bulk-export logistics system. Improved terminal performance supports mining exports and the wider industrial economy, while maintenance and modernisation programmes create opportunities for engineering contractors and materials suppliers. Reliable ports and rail corridors are also essential if South African manufacturers are to compete effectively in export markets....[Read more](#)

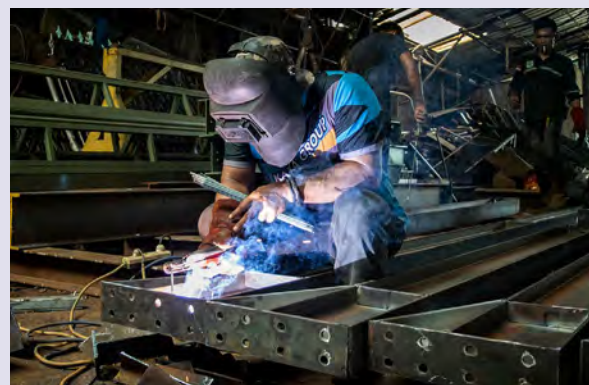
Private investment adds momentum to rail reform

Traxion's R1.4-billion capital raise signals growing private-sector confidence in the reform of South Africa's freight rail system. Expanded private participation could accelerate locomotive investment, improve service reliability and help recover volumes lost to road transport. For the metals and fabrication sectors, a functioning rail network matters twice over: it lowers the cost of moving raw materials and finished products, while rail rehabilitation and fleet investment create a market for locally manufactured components and engineering services....[Read more](#)



Revised industrial strategy targets de-industrialisation

Government's revised Industrial Development Strategy places localisation, productive investment and higher-value manufacturing firmly back on the economic agenda. For the stainless steel sector, the significance lies in whether policy can be translated into predictable demand, competitive input costs and procurement that rewards capable local producers. Reversing de-industrialisation will require more than broad commitments: it will depend on coordinated action across infrastructure, trade, energy and skills development....[Read more](#)



Sassda opens global OEM supply chain to local stainless steel fabricators

Sassda has helped position two South African stainless steel fabricators to enter the supply chain of a German packaging equipment manufacturer, marking tangible progress in its drive to convert localisation opportunities into work for members.

Western Cape-based Fabrinor and Gauteng-based National Stainless Steel Centre have been nominated as potential local suppliers and are progressing through the international original-equipment manufacturer's vetting process.

The German company manufactures packaging machinery used across a wide range of consumer industries, with applications ranging from toothpaste tubes to milk cartons, yoghurt containers and other food and beverage products.

Its immediate requirement is for South African manufacturers capable of supplying replacement parts and customised components for equipment already operating across Africa.

Sassda Executive Director **Michel Basson** says the opportunity emerged through the Localisation Support Fund, which approached the association for assistance in identifying two capable component manufacturers.

"We wanted to provide the company with manufacturing capacity in both the north and south of the country. Fabrinor and National Stainless Steel Centre were nominated and are now progressing through the vetting process," he says.

The OEM's interest in local sourcing is being driven partly by the difficulty and cost of supplying spare parts and customised components to machinery users across Africa from its overseas operations.

The initial focus is expected to be on replacement parts and less complex components. However, successful supplier development could create opportunities for South African companies to manufacture larger assemblies and potentially undertake local assembly in the longer term.

This would represent a significant progression from one-off component orders to sustained participation in an international equipment manufacturer's African supply chain.

Localisation Champion

The first engagement has also encouraged the Localisation Support Fund to approach Sassda with a further manufacturing opportunity for its members. Sassda is due to meet with the fund to establish the technical requirements and determine which local companies are best positioned to participate.

Basson says the development demonstrates Sassda's growing role as a link between international companies seeking local capacity and South African manufacturers capable of meeting their technical and quality requirements.

A separate project involving an American company is already generating local stainless steel work following technical input from Sassda. The overseas company had initially specified an unusual grade of stainless steel that was not readily available in South Africa. Sassda assessed the application and recommended lean duplex stainless steel as a technically suitable and more readily available alternative.

The change in material specification helped persuade the company to manufacture the components locally. Stainless steel components have since been produced and are expected to be transferred to another South African company for assembly and further value addition.

The project is creating activity across several parts of the domestic value chain, including the stainless steel supplier, component manufacturer and assembly operation. "The technical advice did more than resolve a material selection issue. It helped create the conditions for the components to be manufactured in South Africa," Basson explains.

He adds that Sassda is now pursuing several initiatives aimed at providing direct commercial value to members, including localisation, technical support, market intelligence, trade advocacy and export readiness.

The latest projects suggest that this approach is beginning to produce measurable results. Rather than treating localisation as a broad policy ambition, Sassda is using its technical knowledge and industry network to identify specific requirements, connect international buyers with capable manufacturers and turn global supply-chain challenges into production opportunities for South African companies.



Sassda builds data-driven case to defend SA's hollowware industry

Sassda is undertaking a detailed market and technical analysis of South Africa's stainless steel hollowware sector as it seeks to establish a stronger, evidence-based case for local manufacturing and action against potentially underpriced and noncompliant imports.

The research brings together import statistics, retail pricing, product specifications, material grades and local manufacturing capability to build a more complete picture of the pressures confronting domestic producers.

Hollowware encompasses everyday stainless steel products such as pots, pans, bowls, serving dishes and cooking utensils. Although these are relatively simple consumer products, the sector represents an important downstream market for stainless steel producers, stockists, fabricators, finishers and other service providers.

Sassda Executive Director **Michel Basson** says the initiative has moved beyond general concern about cheap imports towards developing the detailed market intelligence needed to support practical intervention.

"Accurate information allows us to generate insights that can make a measurable difference to local industry. The objective is to put Sassda in a position where we can use the available trade and regulatory instruments effectively," he reports.

Sassda has previously investigated the quality of imported hollowware, including whether products complied

with South African Bureau of Standards specifications (SABS) and whether the stainless steel grades claimed by suppliers were being used.

SABS requirements specify grades such as 304 and 430 stainless steel for hollowware sold locally. However, Sassda's earlier investigations found significant variations in the quality and composition of some imported products, raising questions about durability, corrosion resistance and compliance.

The latest research adds a commercial and economic dimension to this technical work. As part of this, Sassda has been monitoring hollowware import volumes and declared customs values over several years. Import volumes declined for a period but began increasing rapidly following the Covid-19 pandemic, when several South African manufacturers lost market share.

Recent Sassda analysis indicates that hollowware imported from China during 2024 and 2025 dominates other countries of origin, and entered South Africa at average declared customs values of much lower than would be practical for South African producers to compete with.

Far from a level playing field

When these values are assessed against the underlying cost of commonly used stainless steel grades, as well as manufacturing, freight and distribution costs, the disparity raises serious questions about whether local manufacturers are competing on an equitable basis.

The concern is not simply that imported products are cheaper. Sassa is seeking to determine whether certain prices are commercially realistic and whether they may indicate dumping, incorrect customs declarations or the use of materials that do not comply with local specifications.

To strengthen its analysis, Sassa is also conducting detailed retail research. This includes visiting stores, photographing products, recording prices and barcodes, checking stated material grades and converting retail prices into comparable per-kilogram values.

The data is being consolidated and analysed using digital and artificial-intelligence-supported tools, allowing Sassa to compare products, retailers, import values and retail margins across a large dataset.

The intention is to establish a defensible benchmark value for stainless steel hollowware. Goods imported

below this benchmark could then be flagged for closer examination by the relevant authorities.

Basson describes the work as a high-level pre-feasibility study that can help determine whether greater local production is commercially viable. "If local manufacturers can compete at globally realistic commercial prices but are being displaced by products entering the country at questionable values, targeted trade remedies or tighter enforcement may be more appropriate than general industry support."

An accountability mechanism

Looking ahead, Sassa plans to use the research to support its engagement with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC). The introduction of permit requirements for certain imported steel products could provide an additional mechanism through which suspiciously low-priced hollowware imports can be identified and investigated.

Sassa does not advocate indiscriminate protection across the stainless steel market. Its approach is to support targeted intervention where there is credible evidence of dumping, misdeclaration, substandard material or other anticompetitive practices.

For Sassa members, the relevance extends beyond existing hollowware manufacturers. Reviving the sector would create demand throughout the value chain, including for stainless steel sheet and coil, tooling, forming, welding, polishing, packaging, logistics and technical services.

The association has also been investigating the production capacity of local automotive and other manufacturing facilities that could potentially diversify into hollowware production. This supply-side assessment is now being combined with the consumer and retail research to establish a holistic view of the market.

The result could provide manufacturers and investors with credible information on demand, pricing, production requirements and potential routes to market. "At the back end, we have examined local manufacturing capacity. At

the front end, we are now analysing what consumers are buying and paying," Basson says.

For a sector seeking to rebuild domestic manufacturing capability, Sassa's hollowware research could offer more than a snapshot of the market. It could provide the factual foundation required to convert localisation ambitions into commercially sustainable production, investment and employment.





Protection buys time but demand will determine the future

South Africa's stainless steel value chain has reached a decisive point. New tariffs and safeguard measures may provide temporary relief from rising imports, but industry leaders and policymakers agree that trade protection alone cannot rebuild domestic manufacturing. Infrastructure investment, enforceable localisation, competitive energy and logistics and stronger downstream demand will determine whether the sector recovers or continues its managed decline.

South Africa's steel sector is confronting what government trade authorities have described as an “emergency situation”, driven by global overcapacity, rising imports, weak domestic demand and a sustained decline in local production.

These pressures extend across the wider metals value chain. While stainless steel operates in a distinct market from carbon and long steel, its producers, merchants, fabricators and end-users face many of the same structural constraints: subdued investment, inconsistent procurement, high electricity and logistics costs, growing import

competition and insufficient demand from infrastructure and industrial projects.

The message emerging from a June 2026 meeting of Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Trade, Industry and Competition was unequivocal: South Africa cannot protect its way out of the crisis. Tariffs and trade remedies can create breathing room, but the sector's future depends on rebuilding demand for locally produced steel and fabricated products.

A demand crisis at the heart of the problem

Appearing before the committee to report on progress with the Steel and Metal Fabrication Master Plan, International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC) chief commissioner **Ayabonga Cawe** identified inadequate domestic demand as one of the sector's most fundamental challenges.

Increased infrastructure spending and industrial investment are therefore essential if South Africa is to create a sustainable market for locally produced steel and downstream fabricated products. The success of the master plan will depend on infrastructure delivery, enforceable localisation, improved coordination across government and a more competitive industrial base, not tariffs in isolation.

This is particularly relevant to stainless steel. The material has important applications across water and

wastewater infrastructure, food and beverage processing, mining, energy, transport, healthcare and architectural projects. However, its durability and low lifecycle cost create demand only when projects are specified correctly, funded and ultimately implemented.

South Africa has no shortage of infrastructure plans. The more pressing question is how quickly these plans can move through project preparation, procurement and construction, and how much of the resulting demand will reach domestic manufacturers and fabricators.

Production declines as imports rise

Data presented by the South African Iron and Steel Institute (Saisi) to Parliament underlined the seriousness of the wider steel industry's position. Annualised crude steel production was reportedly 8% lower in April 2026, while primary steel imports increased by 38% month on month and exports declined by 21%. Import penetration in long steel reached 27% during the first quarter, which Saisi described as crossing a structural threshold.

The longer-term trend is equally concerning. South Africa produced more than nine-million tonnes of steel in 2005, but current output is estimated at less than half that level.

Imports now account for about 36% of South African steel consumption, with China supplying approximately 73% of imported material. Government responded in May by raising duties on specified products, including certain flat-rolled products, bars, rods, tubes and pipes, from previous levels of between zero and 15% to a range of 10% to 30%.

ITAC has also introduced safeguard duties intended to give domestic producers time to adjust to import pressure. The duties start at 52.34% in the first year, before declining to 37.34% and 22.34% over the following two years, with exemptions and rebate mechanisms for products that cannot be sourced locally.

For local manufacturers, these interventions could restore some price discipline. However, protection must be carefully calibrated. If material is unavailable locally, or local

prices rise without corresponding improvements in service and competitiveness, downstream fabricators may be disadvantaged.

Global steel protection intensifies

South Africa's response is taking place amid a worldwide shift towards more assertive industrial and trade policy.

From July 2026, the European Union reduced tariff-free steel import volumes by 47% compared with 2024 levels and increased the duty on above-quota imports from 25% to 50%. It also introduced a "melt and pour" traceability requirement, linking the origin of steel to where it was first melted and cast rather than where it underwent limited subsequent processing.

The UK similarly reduced its tariff-free steel quotas by 51%, with imports above those limits facing a 50% tariff. The UK government cited global overcapacity and the strategic importance of domestic steelmaking to critical infrastructure and defence.

These measures may create further challenges for South African exporters while diverting displaced steel into less-protected markets. They also demonstrate that major economies increasingly regard domestic metals production as a strategic capability rather than simply another commodity market.

Localisation must move beyond policy

Parliament's trade and industry committee has called for binding local procurement commitments, stronger enforcement and closer alignment between infrastructure spending and supplier development.

Its recommendations include enforceable public procurement for domestically produced steel, targeted assistance for vulnerable subsectors, resolution of electricity pricing and freight logistics constraints, development finance and tax incentives for downstream manufacturers, and a rail reindustrialisation compact led by the Presidency. The committee also called for stronger action against illicit, underpriced and incorrectly declared imports.





For the stainless steel industry, localisation must mean more than nominal local-content percentages. It should begin during project design and specification, with domestic capability mapped before tenders are issued.

Local firms also need sufficient visibility of the project pipeline to justify investment in equipment, technical skills, quality systems and international certification. Without predictable demand, manufacturers cannot confidently expand capacity; without capacity, procuring authorities may argue that local suppliers cannot deliver.

Breaking this cycle will require structured engagement among government departments, State-owned companies, engineering consultants, project owners, mills, merchants and fabricators.

Infrastructure represents the greatest opportunity. Public infrastructure is the most immediate route to rebuilding demand. Water and sanitation systems, rail infrastructure, ports, energy projects and public buildings can consume substantial volumes of locally produced and fabricated materials.

Stainless steel has a particularly strong value proposition in water infrastructure, where corrosion resistance, hygiene and long service life can reduce maintenance requirements and whole-life costs. It also has applications in coastal and port environments, food processing, renewable and nuclear energy systems, and rail rolling stock.

However, the industry must continue making the case for lifecycle value. Procurement decisions based largely on the lowest initial price may favour materials that are cheaper upfront but more expensive to maintain and replace.

Competitiveness remains non-negotiable

Localisation and protection cannot substitute for competitiveness. Electricity prices, unreliable freight logistics, municipal service failures, financing costs and skills shortages continue to undermine domestic industry.

Saisi identified electricity pricing as the single most important competitiveness lever and called for

the reinstatement of State-owned enterprise supplier-development programmes. It also argued that the R1-trillion infrastructure pipeline should be deployed with minimal offshore leakage and used to strengthen downstream manufacturing.

For stainless steel companies seeking to export, certification and compliance with international quality, environmental and traceability requirements will become increasingly important. The EU's emerging origin rules and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism illustrate the direction of travel: international buyers will expect more detailed evidence about where material was produced, how it was processed and the carbon intensity attached to it.

Green steel offers a longer-term route forward

Government is developing a steel value-chain roadmap that considers the diversification of production technologies and product mix, including a transition from traditional blast furnaces towards electric arc furnaces and potentially direct-reduced iron.

Green industrial zones in Saldanha Bay and other strategic locations are also under consideration, while hydrogen-based production and renewable energy could eventually give South Africa a lower-carbon competitive advantage.

This transition will require substantial investment and cannot distract from the immediate task of stabilising existing capacity. Nevertheless, South Africa's renewable-energy resources and mineral base could position it strongly if policy certainty, affordable electricity and the required logistics are secured.

A strategic crossroads

South Africa retains deep technical expertise, established production capacity and a downstream manufacturing base capable of supplying demanding local and international markets. Yet capability cannot survive indefinitely without sufficient demand.

The immediate trade measures are therefore best viewed as a window of opportunity, not a permanent solution. They give industry, government and project owners time to rebuild demand, improve competitiveness and strengthen domestic supply chains.

The choices made during 2026 and 2027 will be decisive. If infrastructure spending is implemented, localisation is enforced intelligently and industrial constraints are addressed, the current crisis could become the starting point for renewal.

If implementation falters, South Africa risks losing further production capacity, specialist skills and strategic industrial capability that will be extremely difficult and costly to rebuild.

Sources:

- <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=dSZA-7YiCos> ITAC's parliamentary overview
- Parliament's committee statement European Parliament UK government steel trade measure
- Saisi's industry summary Reuters' report on the tariff changes

Closing the Loop: Skills, Sustainability & Stainless Steel's Future



Cronimet Operations Manager **Dominic Maguire** has built his career from the ground up, combining hands-on materials knowledge with commercial and operational experience. In this profile he outlines his views on circularity, skills development, local manufacturing and the innovations shaping a more resilient future for South Africa's stainless steel industry...

Please tell us a little about your background, including where you grew up, your education and how your career ultimately led you into the stainless steel industry?

I grew up in Johannesburg and completed my schooling at Trinityhouse. After finishing matric, I took a gap year, during which I started a private cricket coaching business. What began as a small venture grew steadily over the next three years, teaching me valuable lessons in entrepreneurship and managing a business from a young age.

Following my gap year, I moved to Pretoria, where I studied towards a BCom degree through UNISA while also completing a certificate in Business Management. During my second year, I entered the recycling industry, joining a waste management company as a sales representative. I spent my time outside class, calling on businesses, building customer relationships and developing an understanding of the recycling sector and its dynamics.

In 2012, I returned to Johannesburg and joined a leading paper merchant, where I spent the next six years in the paper and print industry. During that time, I progressed through several roles, starting in internal sales before

moving into warehouse management and eventually becoming Internal Sales Manager. Working across multiple areas of the business gave me a broad understanding of operations, logistics, customer service and commercial management, providing a strong foundation for the next stage of my career.

In 2018, I joined Cronimet, where I have continued to build on those experiences while developing a deep understanding of the stainless steel recycling and raw materials industry. Each stage of my career has contributed to the practical knowledge, commercial perspective and appreciation for sustainability that continue to shape my approach today.

What have been some of the most significant roles, projects or milestones that have challenged you the most?

Looking back, I attribute much of my practical experience to my time in the paper and print industry. Being involved in virtually every aspect of the business over several years provided me with a solid foundation in operations, customer relationships and commercial decision-making, skills that I continue to build on today.

When I joined Cronimet in 2018, one of the valuable things I did was spend a year in the yard sorting and grading stainless steel. That experience was invaluable. It gave me a thorough understanding of the different grades and chemistries of stainless steel, while also showing me just how versatile the material is and how deeply it is integrated into our everyday lives. Having that hands-on knowledge has been instrumental throughout my career and has given me a much greater appreciation of the entire recycling and production process.

My first major project for Cronimet was both exciting and challenging. It involved travelling to a mine in eastern Zambia to inspect and grade a large parcel of stainless steel material. Securing the project required overcoming numerous technical, logistical and commercial challenges, but it was an incredibly rewarding experience. The lessons I learned and the professional relationships I built during that project have remained with me, and continue to influence the way I approach business today.

Since then, I have been fortunate to visit numerous companies and industrial sites across South Africa, seeing first-hand how stainless steel is used in a wide range of sectors. From mining and mineral processing to the food and beverage industry, hospitality, automotive manufacturing, construction and everyday consumer products, the applications are remarkably diverse. These experiences have reinforced my belief in the importance of stainless steel as a material of the future.

“Customers, suppliers, engineering firms and manufacturers are increasingly recognising that sustainability is not only an environmental responsibility but also a commercial one”

What are the biggest professional lessons you have learnt in your career?

- First, know what you don't know. Acknowledge when you don't have an answer or solution. It is an opportunity to learn, so don't hide from it.
- Communication is key. Whether it is with a colleague, an employee or a customer, it builds trust and mutual appreciation.
- Work with structure, set goals and keep your head down.
- Embrace pressure. Let it drive and focus you.

What is your current role and what does a typical day involve?

I am currently Operations Manager at Cronimet and oversee all aspects of our production and operational activities. My responsibilities include managing logistics, material sorting and quality control, processing operations, supplier engagement, operational reporting and ensuring that our

day-to-day activities run as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Ultimately, my focus is on ensuring that everything works together seamlessly, from the moment material arrives at our facility to when it is delivered to our customers as a high-quality, chemically accurate secondary raw material.

“Technology, automation and improved processing efficiencies are transforming the way stainless steel is produced, recycled and manufactured”

How do you see the company's role evolving as manufacturers and customers increasingly focus on sustainability and the circular economy?

Cronimet is an important part of the global stainless steel supply chain, and our continued investment in recycling technologies is transforming the way critical raw materials are recovered and returned to production. Across the Group, we are developing innovative solutions that not only improve material recovery but also support the transition to a more sustainable and circular economy.

Sustainability is at the core of everything we do. As a result, we have taken meaningful steps to reduce our environmental footprint, including operating our facility entirely on solar power and progressively transitioning away from diesel-powered operating equipment. These initiatives demonstrate that sustainability is not simply an idea. It is embedded in the way we operate.

In Europe, sustainability has become a key driver of business decisions, with growing expectations around responsible sourcing and carbon reduction. We are now seeing those same conversations gaining momentum in South Africa. Customers, suppliers, engineering firms and manufacturers are increasingly recognising that sustainability is not only an environmental responsibility but also a commercial one. It is becoming essential for every participant in the value chain to be part of that conversation, but more importantly, part of the solution.

As a global organisation, Cronimet's sustainability ambitions are aligned with internationally recognised environmental objectives. While South Africa faces unique challenges, including infrastructure constraints and an evolving energy landscape, we believe meaningful progress is achieved through consistent action. Every improvement, no matter how small, contributes to a more sustainable operation.

Cronimet has established itself as a leader in the global metal recycling industry by demonstrating that commercial success and environmental responsibility can go hand in hand. Through continued innovation,

investment and collaboration, we are helping shape a more resilient, low-carbon future for the stainless steel industry.

How important is technical knowledge and skills development to ensuring the successful use and recycling of stainless steel?

The industry is evolving quickly. Technology, automation and improved processing efficiencies are transforming the way stainless steel is produced, recycled and manufactured. However, while technology is an important enabler, it is people who ultimately drive innovation. Skilled engineers, metallurgists, boilermakers, welders, fabricators and manufacturers remain fundamental to the continued growth and success of the industry.

Organisations such as Sassda are already making a valuable contribution through their range of stainless steel training courses, which provide practical knowledge and skills development across the industry. I believe more companies should take advantage of these courses by encouraging employees, from sales teams and procurement staff to welders, fabricators and fitters, to participate. The better people understand stainless steel, its applications and its long-term value, the better equipped they are to recommend, specify and work with the material.

Ultimately, building a stronger skills base benefits the entire industry. It improves product quality, encourages innovation, supports sustainable manufacturing and helps grow confidence in stainless steel as the material of choice. The more knowledgeable advocates we have across the value chain, the greater the opportunity to expand stainless steel consumption and strengthen South Africa's manufacturing sector.

“Building a stronger skills base... improves product quality, encourages innovation, supports sustainable manufacturing and helps grow confidence in stainless steel as the material of choice”

What do you see as the South African stainless steel sector's biggest challenges over the next five years, and where do the greatest opportunities lie?

There is nothing inherently wrong with global competition. In fact, healthy competition drives innovation, efficiency and continuous improvement. My concern arises when the playing field is no longer level. South Africa has become increasingly reliant on imported products, often to the detriment of our local mills, manufacturers, fabricators and engineering companies. The impact has been felt

throughout the entire stainless steel value chain, affecting investment, employment, skills development and local industrial capability.

Over the next five years, I would like to see South Africa become more competitive within the global marketplace, rather than simply becoming a larger market for imported products. Achieving this will require a coordinated effort between industry, state-owned enterprises and government. We need policies that support local manufacturing, greater investment in infrastructure, more reliable and cost-effective logistics and energy, and an operating environment that enables South African businesses to compete on quality, innovation and efficiency.

While the challenges are significant, I remain optimistic. The political and economic reforms currently underway offer an opportunity to rebuild confidence and create a more supportive environment for investment. If we can improve competitiveness and work together across the value chain, I believe we can unlock meaningful growth in the consumption of locally produced stainless steel and build a stronger, more resilient industry for the future.

Which industries do you believe will drive the next phase of growth for stainless steel in South Africa and globally?

One of the most exciting innovations we are working on, is processing redundant mine dumps. Through significant investment in research and advanced processing technologies, we have developed the capability to recover valuable elements that were once considered unrecoverable. These materials can now be returned to the production cycle as high-quality secondary raw materials, reducing waste, conserving natural resources and supporting more sustainable stainless steel production.

We have also developed specialised products for the welding industry, demonstrating how innovation can create new applications for recycled materials while reinforcing the principles of the circular economy. These developments show that recycling is no longer simply about recovering materials. It is about unlocking new value through technology and innovation.

Looking ahead, I believe South Africa's next phase of industrial growth will depend on greater investment in infrastructure and the continued support of strategic manufacturing sectors, particularly the automotive industry. The automotive sector remains one of the country's most important industries, having made substantial investments in manufacturing capacity, skills development and job creation over many years. However, increasing logistics challenges, infrastructure constraints and growing competition from imported vehicles continue to place significant pressure on its competitiveness.

If South Africa can improve logistics, strengthen infrastructure and create an environment that supports local manufacturing and value addition, industries such as automotive and stainless steel will be well positioned for long-term growth.



Straight first time: How welding planning prevents costly distortion

A practical fabrication case study shows how joint design, welding sequence, restraint and heat control can keep stainless steel assemblies within tolerance.

Every fabricator knows the frustration: the bead looks good, the joint is sound and the assembly remains correctly aligned, until it cools and pulls itself out of shape.

Weld distortion is more than a cosmetic problem. It can compromise fit-up, dimensional accuracy and productivity, while severe distortion may affect the performance or structural integrity of the completed weldment. Correcting it adds time, labour and cost, with no guarantee that the original tolerances will be fully restored.

Consider a typical workshop challenge: fabricating a stainless steel panel with welded stiffeners and several attached brackets. The welds are individually straightforward, but they are positioned on one side of the plate. If they are then welded to the plate one after the other, their combined shrinkage can bow the panel and pull its connection points out of alignment.

The solution begins before welding with a production plan that treats distortion as a predictable engineering response.

Why weldments move

Metal expands when heated and contracts as it cools. During welding, the weld pool and surrounding base metal experience rapid, highly localised heating. As the weld solidifies and cools, it attempts to shrink, but the colder surrounding material restrains that contraction.

This creates residual stress within the weldment. Once clamps, fixtures or strongbacks are removed, some of the stress may be released as movement, leaving the component shorter, bowed, twisted or angularly distorted.

Austenitic stainless steels are particularly sensitive because they combine relatively high thermal expansion with low thermal conductivity. Heat remains concentrated around the joint, increasing the need for disciplined heat and sequence control.

Start by reducing weld volume

For the panel fabrication, the first step is to confirm that every weld is correctly sized. Oversized fillet welds introduce

unnecessary filler metal, heat and shrinkage force without providing a corresponding engineering benefit.

Correct fit-up is equally important. Excessive root gaps and unnecessarily wide groove angles increase the volume of deposited metal, consumable use and welding time. On thicker plate, a double-V preparation may require less filler metal and provide better stress balance than a comparable single-V joint, provided both sides are accessible.

Where the design permits, intermittent welds can replace continuous seams on stiffeners and similar attachments. This can substantially reduce the total deposited weld metal while still providing the required strength.

Balance forces around the neutral axis

The position of a weld determines how much leverage its shrinkage force has over the component. Welds located close to the neutral axis generally create less bending, while welds positioned far from it can generate significant angular movement.

In the panel example, completing all the welds on one side before beginning elsewhere would concentrate heat and contraction in one area. A more effective sequence alternates between opposing sides and different areas of the assembly, allowing one shrinkage force to counter another. Subassemblies should also be planned so that each stage remains as balanced as possible. The aim is not merely to complete welds conveniently, but to distribute heat and contraction throughout the structure.

Use sequence to control movement

A planned sequence can prevent local shrinkage from accumulating into large-scale distortion. Practical options include alternating sides of a joint, staggering welds across



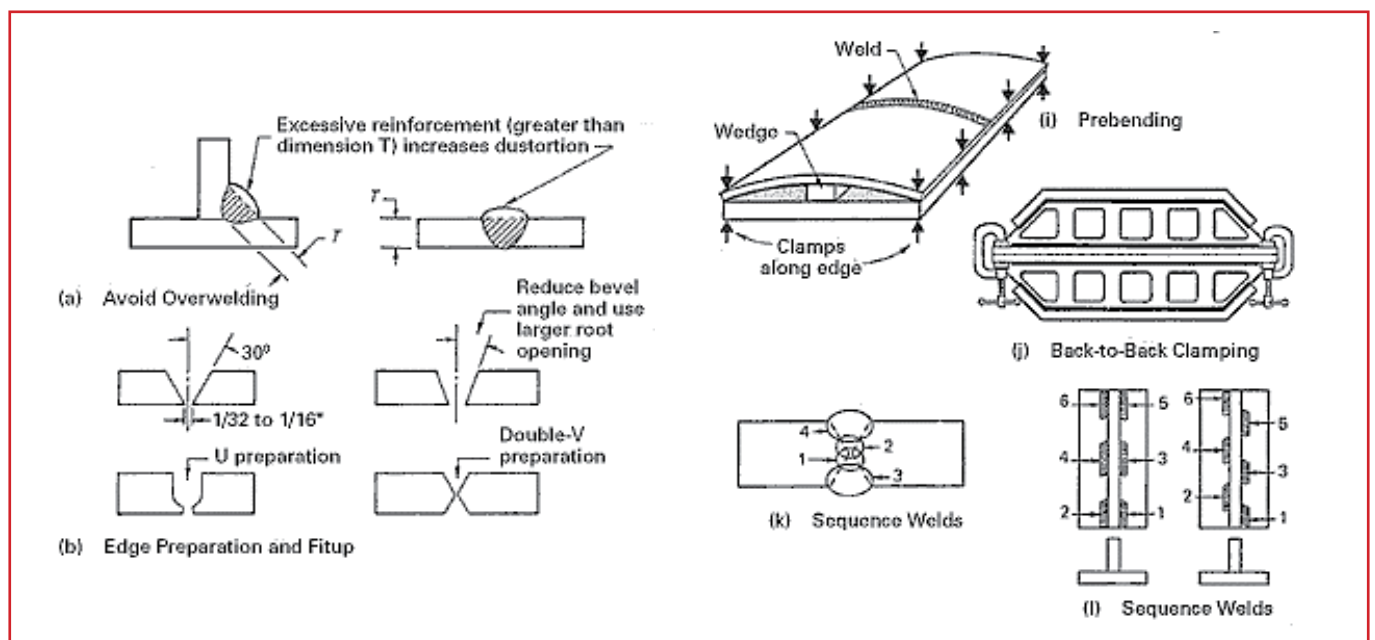
the fabrication and welding towards the unrestrained portion of a member.

Backstep welding may also be useful. With this technique, the overall weld progresses in one direction while each short bead is deposited in the opposite direction.

It can help distribute contraction, although it is not suitable or economical for every joint.

The number of passes should be kept to the minimum permitted by the approved welding procedure and joint requirements. Multiple passes create repeated heating and cooling cycles, with each pass adding further shrinkage.

Preset for the expected result where the likely direction





of movement is known, the components can be preset, pre-bent or pre-sprung in the opposite direction. Welding shrinkage is then used to pull the assembly towards its required final position.

The correct preset may be determined from previous production data, a representative trial weld or procedure development. For repeat fabrication, recording the actual movement of the first unit enables the workshop to refine the preset and sequence for subsequent assemblies.

Identical weldments may also be clamped back to back so their shrinkage forces oppose one another. They should remain restrained until they have cooled sufficiently to minimise movement when the clamps are released.

Restraint is not a complete solution

Clamps, fixtures, jigs and strongbacks help maintain fit-up and alignment during welding. Strongbacks are particularly useful on butt-welded plate, where clips and wedges can hold plate edges in position throughout the welding cycle.

However, restraint does not remove shrinkage. It can convert visible movement into residual stress. Some movement may occur after the restraint is released, particularly if the component remains hot.

Fixtures should therefore support a sound welding strategy rather than compensate for over-welding, poor fit-up or an unbalanced sequence.

On thin sheet, water-cooled or heat-sink fixtures can combine restraint with rapid heat removal. These systems require careful application to avoid excessively rapid cooling or adverse effects on weld quality and metallurgy.

Control heat without compromising the procedure

Distortion control is closely linked to heat input, but “less heat” does not simply mean welding as quickly as possible. Current, voltage, travel speed, electrode size, deposition rate and welding position must remain within the qualified procedure.

Positioners can increase flat-position welding, allowing efficient deposition and consistent travel. The objective is to deposit the required weld metal efficiently without overheating a large surrounding area.

Peening may be permitted in selected applications to counter weld contraction, but it requires engineering approval and must comply with the applicable procedure. Root and final passes are generally excluded because of cracking and inspection concerns.

Thermal stress relief may reduce residual stresses in suitable weldments, but stainless steel grade, component design and service requirements must be considered before any heat treatment is specified.

The workshop control plan

Before striking the arc, the fabrication team should confirm that it has:

- Avoided over-welding and minimised groove volume
- Achieved consistent fit-up and root gaps
- Used intermittent welds where permitted
- Balanced welds around the neutral axis
- Planned an alternating, symmetrical welding sequence
- Limited the number of passes
- Selected a qualified, controlled heat-input procedure
- Used positioners where these improve welding efficiency
- Provided appropriate clamps, fixtures or strongbacks
- Preset components for predictable shrinkage
- Planned subassembly and final-assembly sequencing
- Allowed the fabrication to cool sufficiently before releasing restraint

Distortion cannot be eliminated entirely, but it can be controlled. In the panel example, reducing weld volume, alternating the stiffener welds, presetting the plate and maintaining restraint during cooling prevents individual shrinkage forces from accumulating in one direction.

The result is a straighter assembly, more accurate connections and substantially less corrective work. The central lesson is simple: distortion control belongs in the welding plan, not in the repair bay.



Before the arc strikes: How to predict and control stainless steel weld shrinkage

By calculating the likely movement before welding begins, fabricators can improve dimensional accuracy, reduce costly rework and prevent distortion from compromising the finished assembly.

In stainless steel fabrication, weld distortion should not be regarded as an unexpected event. It is a predictable consequence of localised heating, thermal expansion, weld-metal solidification, contraction and restraint.

The challenge is particularly significant when welding austenitic stainless steels. These grades have relatively low thermal conductivity and a higher rate of thermal expansion than carbon steel. Heat remains concentrated around the weld for longer, while the material expands and contracts more significantly during the welding cycle.

A joint that is correctly aligned before the first arc is struck can therefore pull, bow or twist as it cools. In precision fabrications, even relatively small dimensional changes can move holes and flanges out of alignment, alter the profile of a component or create difficulties during final assembly.

Experienced fabricators consequently treat shrinkage as part of the production plan. Before welding begins, they consider how much filler metal will be deposited, how the joint geometry will contract, how the welding sequence will distribute heat and how clamps or fixtures will influence the final movement.

The rule of thumb every fabricator should know as a preliminary rule of thumb, fabricators can allow between 3 mm and 6 mm of movement across the joint for every 25 mm of weld throat thickness. On single-V groove joints, angular distortion can also develop rapidly and may fall in the range of 1° to 3° per weld pass.

These figures should be treated as workshop planning guides rather than substitutes for an engineering calculation or a representative welding trial. Actual movement will depend on the stainless steel grade, joint design, plate thickness, welding process, heat input, number and size of passes, restraint and overall stiffness of the fabrication.

The practical message is nevertheless important: stainless steel is unlikely to remain exactly where it was positioned unless the likely direction and magnitude of movement have been considered in advance.

Turning movement into a number

For a butt joint, transverse shrinkage can be estimated using the following engineering formula: $\Delta W = 4.5 \times A \div t$

Where:

ΔW is the estimated shrinkage across the joint
 A is the weld-groove area in mm^2
 t is the plate thickness in mm

The formula provides a preliminary indication of the transverse contraction that could occur once the deposited weld metal and surrounding heat-affected zones have cooled.

It should be used as a planning tool and checked against the fabricator's own production experience, welding procedure and, where tolerances are critical, a representative trial joint.

Start with the shape of the joint

The first step is to calculate the cross-sectional area of the weld groove. This is the space that will be filled with weld metal and is one of the principal factors influencing total shrinkage.

The joint can be divided into simple rectangles and triangles, with the areas then added together. For a simplified single-V joint, a practical estimate is:
 $A = (g \times t) + [t^2 \times \tan(\theta/2)]$

Where:

A is the groove cross-sectional area
 g is the root gap
 t is the plate thickness
 θ is the included groove angle

Once the groove area has been calculated, it can be entered into the shrinkage formula to provide a more realistic expectation of how far the joint may pull across the weld.

The calculation also highlights an important production consideration. An unnecessarily wide groove angle or excessive root gap increases the volume of filler metal required. This adds welding time and consumable cost while introducing more heat and greater shrinkage forces into the fabrication.

Reducing unnecessary weld-metal volume is therefore one of the most effective ways to limit distortion, provided that the joint continues to meet its design, strength and accessibility requirements.

Why the first pass matters most

Shrinkage is cumulative, but its effect is not necessarily distributed evenly between passes. The root and early filling passes can have a particularly significant influence on angular movement because they begin pulling the joint while the surrounding structure and deposited weld section remain relatively free to respond.

Later passes add more weld metal and increase the total transverse contraction. However, each pass is deposited onto an increasingly rigid weld section, and its effect will also depend on its position within the groove.

As a working allowance within the supplied methodology, the calculated result can be increased by about 10% for each additional pass beyond a single-pass

weld. This should be treated as a preliminary planning adjustment rather than a universal prediction, as bead size, heat input and welding sequence can vary considerably between procedures.

The objective should be to use the fewest passes consistent with the approved welding procedure, required weld quality and metallurgical limitations of the grade being welded. Over-welding increases consumable use, labour time, heat input and the forces responsible for shrinkage.

Clamps reduce movement but not shrinkage forces

Most shrinkage calculations assume that the plates are free to move. In a workshop, however, components are frequently restrained using clamps, jigs, strongbacks or dedicated fixtures.

As a preliminary workshop guide:

- An unclamped or freely moving joint may experience close to 100% of the calculated movement.
- A lightly clamped joint may display about 60% to 70% of the calculated movement.
- A heavily fixtured joint may display about 30% to 40% of the calculated movement.

These percentages are indicative only. The actual result depends on fixture stiffness, tack-weld placement, component geometry, welding sequence and the point at which the restraint is released.

Importantly, restraint does not eliminate shrinkage. It changes the way the fabrication responds to it. If a component cannot contract freely, part of the contraction is converted into residual stress.

When the clamps are removed, some delayed movement may still occur. In highly restrained fabrications, significant stresses may remain locked into the component, potentially affecting subsequent machining, assembly or service performance.

Fixtures should therefore form part of a broader distortion-control strategy rather than being used to compensate for excessive heat input, over-welding or an unsuitable joint design.

Do not overlook longitudinal pull

Transverse shrinkage occurs across the weld, while longitudinal shrinkage shortens the component in the direction of the weld.

Longitudinal movement is generally smaller than transverse shrinkage, but it can still cause bowing, end pull and alignment problems on long seams. As a broad workshop guide, longitudinal movement of approximately 3 mm to 6 mm along a long weld seam may be sufficient to affect a precision fabrication.

The actual amount will depend on the seam length, weld cross-section, heat input, component stiffness and position of the weld relative to the neutral axis of the assembly.

A weld positioned away from the neutral axis can

introduce bending as well as shortening. Similarly, a series of unbalanced welds on one side of a fabrication can create cumulative distortion even when the movement associated with each individual weld appears relatively small.

Long seams should therefore be assessed as part of the complete structure rather than considered in isolation.

Plan the weld before the metal moves

The most effective distortion control begins before welding. The fabricator should confirm the joint type, plate thickness, groove angle, root gap, root face, welding process, heat input and anticipated number of passes before deciding how the assembly should be restrained and sequenced.

Depending on the design and application, practical control measures can include:

- Reducing unnecessary weld-metal volume
- Using double-V joints on thicker sections where both sides are accessible
- Presetting components opposite to the expected movement
- Applying balanced or symmetrical welding sequences
- Using back-step, skip or block welding techniques where appropriate
- Alternating welds around the neutral axis
- Controlling heat input and interpass temperature
- Using correctly positioned tack welds and strongbacks
- Welding smaller subassemblies before completing the main structure
- Conducting a representative trial before repeat production

The correct approach will vary from one fabrication to another. Thin sheet may be particularly vulnerable to buckling, while thick and highly restrained sections may retain significant residual stress even when visible distortion is limited.

From calculation to workshop control

Shrinkage calculations do not guarantee a final dimension. Their value lies in providing a rational starting point for the fabrication plan.

Once the likely direction and scale of movement have been estimated, the fabricator can decide whether the joint requires a modified root opening, preset, alternative sequence, different fixturing arrangement or representative trial.

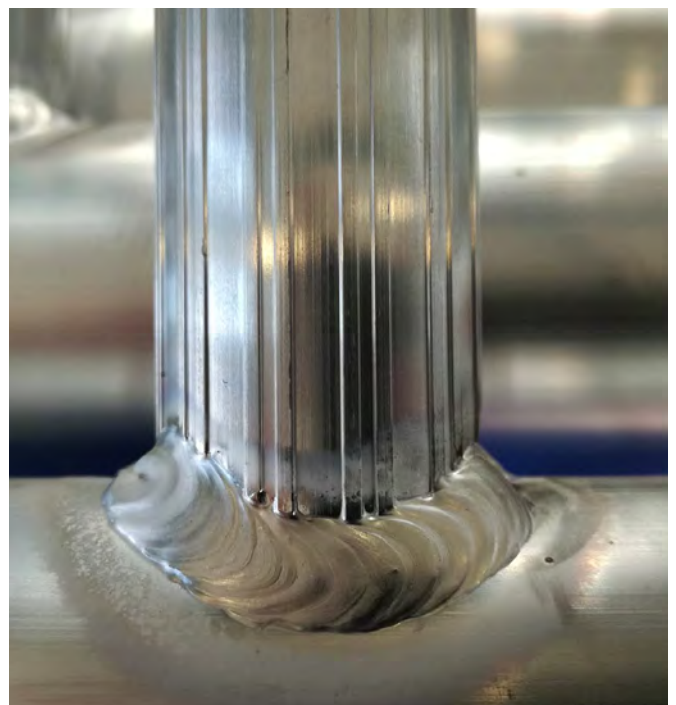
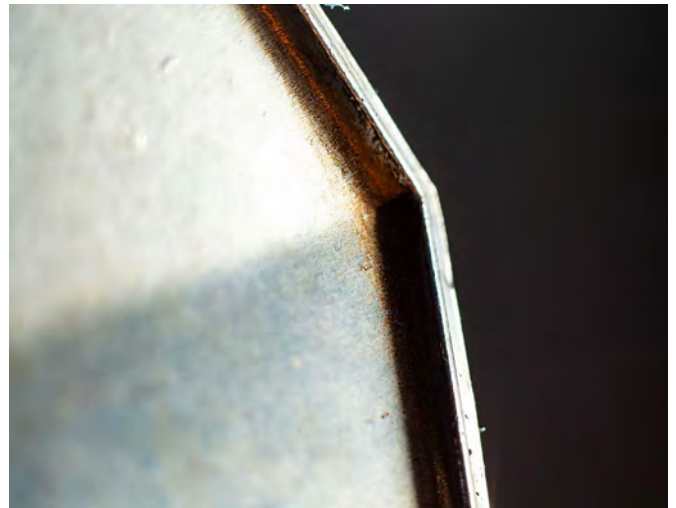
Production results should also be recorded. Measuring the actual movement from the first completed fabrication creates valuable workshop data that can be used to refine allowances for subsequent units produced with the same material, joint configuration, welding procedure and restraint.

This turns distortion control from a reactive correction process into an increasingly accurate production system. Correcting a distorted stainless steel assembly after

welding can be costly and technically difficult. Mechanical straightening may damage the surface, while thermal correction must be carefully controlled to avoid further distortion, metallurgical changes, residual stress or impaired corrosion performance.

The strongest result is therefore achieved before the first arc is struck. By calculating the weld volume, predicting the likely direction of contraction and designing the welding sequence around that movement, fabricators can improve dimensional control, reduce rework and produce more consistent stainless steel assemblies.

Stainless steel will always expand and contract beneath the welding arc. The fabricator's advantage lies in knowing where that movement is likely to go, and planning the job so that the finished component ends up exactly where it should.



R1bn food-processing investment could unlock 2000 t of stainless steel demand



From dairy tanks and hygienic piping to bottling and packaging lines, investment in South Africa's food and beverage sector could generate significant new demand across the stainless steel value chain...

Consider a hypothetical R1-billion investment programme in South Africa's food and beverage processing sector, which could generate demand for an 800 t to 2 000 t of stainless steel, while creating opportunities for local fabricators, equipment manufacturers, service centres, engineers, installers and maintenance contractors.

The precise impact would depend on the mix of projects involved. A capital programme dominated by new dairy, brewery or beverage-processing facilities would be considerably more stainless steel-intensive than an investment focused mainly on buildings, warehousing or distribution infrastructure. Nevertheless, the scenario illustrates the substantial industrial multiplier that can be created when investment in agriculture and food production is deliberately linked to local procurement and manufacturing.

A R1-billion programme could include new dairy-processing facilities, expanded beverage and bottling lines,

upgraded food factories, cold-chain infrastructure and additional agri-processing capacity serving domestic and African markets. While this would primarily be viewed as an investment in food production, a significant proportion of the resulting expenditure would flow into the engineering and stainless steel sectors.

Calculating the stainless steel opportunity

Depending on the type and scale of the facilities, processing equipment, storage systems, piping, refrigeration, conveyors, utilities and packaging lines could account for between 25% and 45% of total project expenditure. This would equate to a potential equipment and engineering market of R250-million to R450-million from a R1-billion capital programme.

Not all this expenditure would relate directly to stainless steel. It would also include pumps, motors, control systems, electrical equipment, automation, instrumentation and

installation. However, stainless steel would be a central material in the parts of the plant that store, transport, process or come into contact with food and beverages.

On an illustrative basis, such an investment could generate demand for between 800 t and 2 000 t of stainless steel across plate, sheet, coil, tube, pipe, fittings, bar and fabricated components. This range is not a formal forecast and would need to be tested through a dedicated economic impact study. It does, however, demonstrate the scale of demand that could be created if a meaningful portion of the equipment was designed and manufactured locally.

The value of the opportunity also extends well beyond the basic cost of the metal, as stainless steel gains considerable value as it moves through cutting, forming, welding, machining, polishing, testing, assembly and installation.

Every processing plant starts with stainless steel

Food and beverage manufacturing is one of the most important application markets for stainless steel because of the material's corrosion resistance, durability, cleanability and suitability for hygienic processing environments.

Stainless steel is used from the point at which raw agricultural products enter a facility until the final packaged goods leave the production line.

Potential applications arising from a R1-billion investment programme could include:

- Raw milk and product storage tanks
- Mixing and blending vessels
- Fermentation tanks and brewery vessels
- Pasteurisers and heat exchangers
- Hygienic process piping and fittings
- Pumps, valves and manifolds
- Silos, hoppers and chutes
- Conveyor and product-handling systems
- Refrigeration and cooling equipment
- Bottling, canning and filling lines
- Food preparation tables and work surfaces
- Commercial kitchen equipment
- Washdown and cleaning systems
- Packaging machinery and components
- Platforms, access structures and drainage systems

Grades 304 and 304L would typically account for a significant proportion of general food-processing applications. More demanding environments involving high chloride levels, aggressive cleaning chemicals or corrosive ingredients could require grade 316L or selected duplex grades. Correct material selection would be essential to ensuring that equipment delivers the required hygiene, corrosion performance and service life without unnecessary over-specification.

Localisation determines the real economic benefit. The strongest business opportunity would arise if investors and project developers sourced a greater proportion of equipment and fabrication locally. South Africa has experienced continued pressure from imported finished equipment and complete processing systems and, while some specialised technologies may still need to be imported, significant scope exists to manufacture tanks, vessels, pipework, conveyors, structural components and supporting equipment domestically.

Local fabrication could include equipment produced under licence or to drawings supplied by international original-equipment manufacturers. It could also encompass the localisation of replacement parts, customised components, skid-mounted systems and complete assemblies. This model would allow South African companies to participate progressively in global supply chains, beginning with components and maintenance work before moving into more complex systems and equipment assembly.

Local procurement would also improve access to replacement parts and technical support, shorten lead times and reduce exposure to international freight costs and exchange-rate volatility. Importing a completed processing system transfers much of its manufacturing value offshore, while local production retains expenditure throughout the domestic value chain, benefiting stainless steel suppliers, processors, fabricators, consumable suppliers, engineering businesses, logistics companies and maintenance contractors.



A high-value employment multiplier

South Africa's stainless steel sector is predominantly downstream and fabrication-driven. Its employment value therefore lies not only in producing or distributing metal, but also in transforming that metal into technically demanding, high-value products.

Industry estimates indicate that the stainless steel value chain supports about 20 000 to 25 000 direct jobs. It is also considered more employment-intensive per tonne than many conventional carbon steel activities because of the specialised processes involved in fabrication and finishing.

An increase in food-processing investment would create work across a broad range of occupations, including:

- TIG welders and coded welders
- Stainless steel fabricators
- Pipe fitters and mechanical fitters
- CNC machine and laser-cutting operators
- CAD designers and draughtspeople
- Mechanical and process engineers
- Project managers
- Quality-control inspectors
- Food-safety and compliance specialists
- Commissioning and maintenance technicians

The number of jobs created would depend on the percentage of equipment manufactured locally, the

duration of the investment programme and whether orders developed into sustained production rather than once-off projects. Even where permanent job creation was limited, a strong project pipeline would help local companies retain critical skills, improve capacity utilisation and provide additional apprenticeship and workplace training opportunities.

Raising South Africa's technical capability

Food-processing equipment must meet demanding standards relating to surface finish, hygienic design, cleanability, weld quality, traceability and contamination control. A larger domestic project pipeline would therefore encourage investment in higher-level manufacturing capabilities, including automated welding, precision forming, laser cutting, CNC machining, orbital tube welding, non-destructive testing and advanced quality-management systems.

It would also create an incentive for fabricators to develop expertise in hygienic design and international food-safety requirements. These capabilities could subsequently be applied in other high-value stainless steel markets, including pharmaceuticals, chemicals, water treatment, brewing, commercial catering and biotechnology.

For Sassda and its members, this reinforces the importance of supporting the industry through technical advice, training, material selection, standards guidance and connections between project developers and capable local suppliers.





Linking food security to export growth

Modern processing infrastructure can help South Africa reduce post-harvest losses, improve product consistency, extend shelf life and increase the value derived from agricultural production. It can also enable food and beverage companies to comply with the hygiene, quality and traceability requirements of export markets.

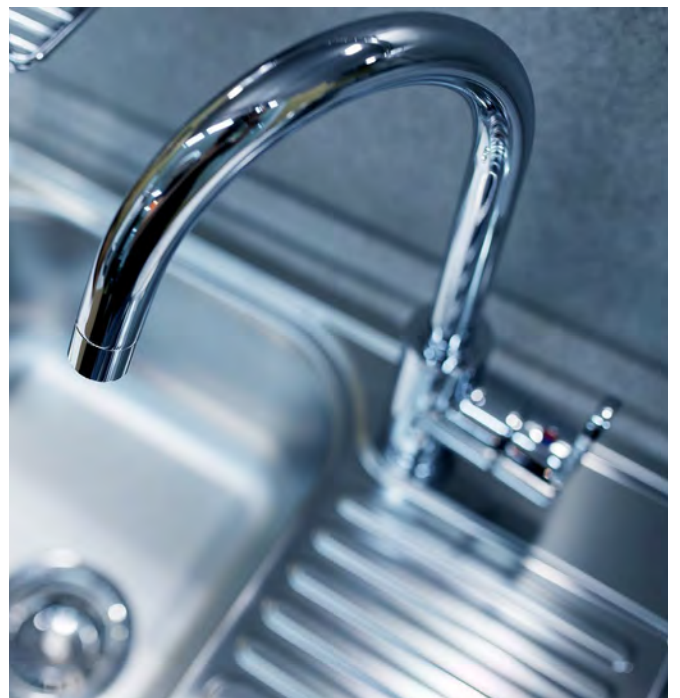
As processors expand into African and international markets, demand for efficient, reliable and hygienically designed production equipment should grow alongside them. This creates a reinforcing cycle in which increased processing capacity supports exports, exports encourage further investment and new investment stimulates demand for locally produced stainless steel equipment.

South African fabricators that build a track record in the domestic food and beverage sector could also use that expertise to supply processing equipment, components and maintenance services into other African markets.

Turning investment into industrial growth

A R1-billion food and beverage investment programme would not automatically deliver its full potential to the domestic stainless steel sector. The outcome would depend on early engagement with local suppliers, realistic procurement specifications, appropriate material selection and a willingness to separate specialised imported technology from equipment that can be produced competitively in South Africa.

With a coordinated localisation strategy, however, the programme could support an estimated 800 t to 2 000 t of stainless steel demand and create a R250-million to R450-



million market for equipment and engineering services

More importantly, it could strengthen manufacturing SMEs, preserve specialised skills and build South Africa's capability to supply sophisticated food-processing systems.

Every new dairy, brewery, bottling plant or food factory should therefore be viewed as more than a production facility. It is also a potential industrial development platform capable of generating business throughout the stainless steel value chain.

Beyond Stainless Steel

Engineering Hygiene into Every Process



Why hygienic food processing is about far more than the equipment itself

In food and beverage processing, stainless steel is everywhere. It is durable, corrosion resistant and ideally suited to hygienic applications.

But **stainless steel alone does not make a process hygienic.**

The real challenge is engineering the complete process so that equipment can reliably produce the required product, clean effectively, minimise contamination risks and deliver consistent performance.

This is where **Anderson Engineering** has built its expertise.

For more than six decades, Anderson Engineering has designed and manufactured customised stainless-steel processing solutions for the food industry, with particular expertise in **high-viscosity liquids, sauces, mixing, blending and Clean-in-Place (CIP) systems.**

Hygiene is engineered - not added afterwards

Hygienic engineering begins long before stainless steel enters the workshop. Vessel geometry, surface finish, weld quality, pipework configuration, valves, product-contact components, drainage and cleanability all influence the hygienic performance of a system.

Anderson Engineering integrates these considerations from the outset. The company is an **EHEDG member**, is

certified to **ISO 9001:2015** and **ISO 3834 Part 2**, and has the capability to design and manufacture pressure vessels in accordance with ASME Section VIII.

But standards and accreditations are only part of the equation. **Practical experience is what turns them into effective engineering.**

Experience matters

Anderson Engineering has delivered numerous food-industry projects involving **sauce processing and CIP**, building valuable practical knowledge around some of the industry's more challenging applications.

High-viscosity products demand careful consideration of mixing, heat transfer, pumping, transfer lines, product behaviour and cleaning. These are not simply equipment decisions – they are process engineering decisions.

Anderson Engineering therefore starts with the **product and the process**, rather than an off-the-shelf machine.

Test the process before you commit

Developing a new process can involve significant uncertainty. Will the product mix correctly? How will it behave during processing? Can it be transferred effectively?

Anderson Engineering's **pilot plant facility** allows prospective customers to conduct trials before committing to a full-scale installation. This provides an opportunity to test and refine the process using actual products and conditions, reducing uncertainty before capital is invested.

Custom-built. Turnkey. Process-driven

Anderson Engineering provides **custom-built processing solutions**, rather than standardised equipment. Its in-house process and mechanical engineering capabilities allow projects to progress from process concept and P&ID through detailed engineering, fabrication, installation, commissioning and handover.

While specialising in high-viscosity liquid processing, the company also provides powder blending solutions, including ribbon blending and conveying systems.

Stainless steel is the material. Engineering is the difference.

From pilot trials and process engineering to hygienic fabrication, CIP, installation and commissioning, **Anderson Engineering delivers complete processing solutions engineered around the customer's process and product requirements.**

Ready to engineer your next hygienic processing solution?

Contact Anderson Engineering:
mail@andersoneng.co.za · Tel: 033 387 1544/5/6
www.andersoneng.co.za

R156bn water pipeline drives new stainless steel demand



From treatment plants and reservoirs to pumping systems and desalination equipment, South Africa's expanding water infrastructure programme presents a major opportunity for local stainless steel manufacturers...

South Africa's commitment of more than R156-billion in public funding for water and sanitation infrastructure over the next three years places the country's water challenge at the centre of its infrastructure and industrial development agenda. Announced as part of government's 2026 programme, the funding is complemented by a R54-billion incentive for metropolitan municipalities to reform and improve their water, sanitation and electricity services.

For South Africa's stainless steel sector, this represents a substantial potential market. New and upgraded treatment plants, wastewater facilities, pumping stations, reservoirs, bulk water networks and desalination projects require materials capable of operating reliably for decades under conditions involving corrosion, continuous moisture, chemical exposure and fluctuating water quality. Stainless steel's corrosion resistance, strength, durability and relatively low maintenance requirements can extend infrastructure life, reduce downtime and lower the total cost of ownership.

A substantial national project pipeline

The public funding commitment is supported by major bulk water projects already under construction or moving towards implementation. The 2026 Budget Review

places the revised capital investment in Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project at R53.3-billion, with the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority having raised R24-billion towards the Polihali Dam, transfer tunnel and associated infrastructure.

Other developments include the R24-billion uMkhomazi Water Augmentation Project and the R12.3-billion second phase of the Mokolo-Crocodile River Water Augmentation Project, which is expected to supply about 75-million cubic metres of water annually. The Department of Water and Sanitation has also reported that major national projects representing about R130-billion in investment have been unblocked and are being implemented, with much of the funding coming from private-sector sources.

Municipal and regional projects add further depth. Water infrastructure grants announced for 2026/27 include four bulk schemes worth R2.24-billion in the Chris Hani district, the R2-billion Loskop Regional Bulk Water Supply Scheme, the R1.1-billion George Water Supply Project and North West schemes collectively valued at more than R2.3-billion.

These figures confirm that the opportunity is no longer hypothetical. South Africa has a real pipeline capable of generating demand for stainless steel plate, sheet, pipe, tube, fittings, bar and fabricated equipment.



Water infrastructure depends on materials that last

Water assets must operate continuously and safely, often for several decades. Material selection is therefore both an engineering and financial decision, particularly in facilities exposed to chlorides, treatment chemicals, wastewater contaminants and coastal conditions. The lowest-cost material at construction is not necessarily the most economical over the asset's life, as coating replacement, corrosion damage, leaks and premature failure can increase operating costs and disrupt essential services.

Stainless steel offers a strong lifecycle proposition where corrosion resistance, hygiene and structural integrity are critical. It can be used selectively in the most aggressive areas or more extensively where maintenance access is limited and reliability is a priority. Typical applications include:

- Treatment and wastewater facilities, pumping stations and reservoirs
- Storage tanks, process vessels, pipework and pipe spools
- Filtration, screening, clarifier and aeration systems
- Desalination and chemical-dosing equipment
- Pumps, valves, fittings and flow-control equipment
- Platforms, walkways, handrails, gratings and structural supports

The appropriate grade depends on water chemistry, temperature, chloride concentration, chemical exposure and mechanical requirements. Grades 304 and 304L may suit less aggressive environments, while 316L is frequently considered where improved chloride resistance is required. Duplex and higher-alloyed grades can provide additional strength and corrosion resistance in demanding coastal and desalination applications.

Specialist advice is essential: under-specification can cause premature failure, while unnecessary over-specification can undermine project competitiveness.

A broad market for stainless steel products

Water infrastructure creates demand across numerous product forms: plate and sheet for tanks and vessels; pipe and tube for conveyance and process systems; bar and machined components for pumps and valves; and sections, gratings and fasteners for supporting structures.

A pump-station upgrade may require modest quantities, while a large treatment, wastewater or desalination facility could consume hundreds or potentially thousands of tonnes across its equipment and supporting infrastructure.

The full opportunity lies in the cumulative effect of multiple projects. A sustained national pipeline would provide more predictable demand over several years, allowing fabricators to invest in machinery, develop specialist skills, take on apprentices and improve production processes with greater confidence. The commercial value also extends beyond the metal itself, as stainless steel gains value through cutting, forming, machining, welding, polishing, testing, assembly, installation and commissioning.

Localisation determines the industrial value

The greatest economic benefit will be achieved if water programmes deliberately increase the participation of capable South African manufacturers. Local companies can produce treatment tanks, process vessels, pipe spools, pump components, filtration systems, access structures, screens, gratings, specialised fittings and skid-mounted assemblies.

Some proprietary technologies may still need to be sourced internationally, but these can often be separated from structural and mechanical components that can be manufactured locally or under licence. This would allow domestic businesses to move progressively from replacement parts and simpler components into complete assemblies, equipment packages and locally engineered systems.

Greater localisation would also reduce dependence on imported spares, long lead times and exchange-rate volatility. Importing complete systems transfers manufacturing value offshore, whereas local production retains expenditure across mills, service centres, fabricators, consumable suppliers, engineering companies, testing businesses, logistics providers and maintenance contractors. Early engagement with suppliers is therefore critical to identifying the work packages South African companies can deliver competitively.

Employment beyond construction

The stainless steel value chain is estimated to support about 20 000 to 25 000 direct jobs and is more labour-intensive per tonne than many conventional carbon steel activities because of the technical processes required to produce finished equipment. Water investment would create work

during design, fabrication and construction, but treatment plants, pumping stations and wastewater facilities also require inspection, repair and component replacement throughout their operating lives.

The resulting demand could support coded welders, fabricators, boilermakers, pipe fitters, CNC operators, draughtspeople, engineers, project managers, quality inspectors, corrosion specialists, instrumentation technicians and maintenance personnel. A sustained pipeline would help companies retain experienced artisans while creating workplace opportunities for apprentices, engineering graduates and technicians.

Raising engineering and manufacturing capability

Water projects are technically demanding. Components must meet strict requirements relating to pressure, structural integrity, weld quality, corrosion performance, dimensional accuracy and long-term reliability, while modern treatment systems increasingly incorporate automation, instrumentation and remote monitoring.

A larger domestic pipeline could encourage investment in automated welding, precision forming, CNC machining, orbital tube welding, non-destructive testing and advanced quality systems. It could also help manufacturers acquire the certifications and references needed to enter international infrastructure markets. These capabilities are transferable to food and beverage processing, mining, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and energy.

For Sassa and its members, this underlines the importance of early involvement in project planning. Guidance on grade selection, fabrication, corrosion risk and lifecycle costs can ensure stainless steel is specified where it provides the greatest long-term value.

Water security is an economic enabler

Reliable water infrastructure supports agriculture, food processing, mining, tourism, residential development and virtually every form of industrial activity. Effective wastewater treatment is equally important to protecting resources, meeting environmental requirements and enabling urban and industrial expansion.

Stainless steel-intensive water systems can therefore deliver a dual benefit: direct demand for materials, fabrication, engineering and maintenance, and wider productivity gains made possible by improved water security. In areas where unreliable supply or insufficient treatment capacity constrains development, an upgraded reservoir, pumping station or treatment plant can unlock economic activity far beyond the project boundary.

Building an African export platform

South Africa's water challenge is shared across the continent. Urbanisation, industrial growth and climate pressure are driving demand for treatment plants, pumping systems, storage infrastructure and decentralised water solutions. Local companies that build strong domestic experience could use it to supply stainless steel equipment, replacement parts and engineering services elsewhere in Africa, turning public infrastructure projects into technical references and an export platform.

Turning water investment into industrial growth

The investment pipeline will not automatically translate into a stronger local stainless steel industry. Realising its full value will require accurate specifications, early engagement with manufacturers, practical local-content requirements and procurement models that evaluate lifecycle performance rather than initial price alone. Large contracts should also distinguish between specialised imported technology and the components South African companies can produce competitively, with accessible work packages enabling more local fabricators and engineering SMEs to participate.

Water is one of South Africa's most strategic resources, and the infrastructure used to capture, treat, transport and protect it is equally important. With more than R156-billion in public funding committed over three years and major projects already moving into implementation, the opportunity is significant. The right procurement and localisation approach can turn this programme into sustained stainless steel demand, stronger domestic manufacturing, scarce-skills development and a more resilient industrial economy.



Zimbabwe's Industrial Reset: New Growth Frontier for Stainless Steel



Zimbabwe's transition from raw-material exporter to regional processing and manufacturing hub is creating significant opportunities for stainless steel across mineral beneficiation, pharmaceuticals, industrial infrastructure and engineering.

Zimbabwe is entering a potentially transformative phase in its industrial development. Long defined by abundant mineral resources but constrained by economic volatility, the Southern African country is pursuing a more ambitious proposition: processing its raw materials domestically, rebuilding manufacturing capacity and capturing more value before its commodities cross the border.

This industrial pivot could create a particularly promising market for stainless steel. New mineral-processing plants, pharmaceutical facilities, industrial parks and supporting infrastructure will require materials capable of withstanding corrosive chemicals, demanding operating conditions and strict hygiene requirements.

With a population of about 17-million and a strategic position between South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and



Mozambique, Zimbabwe offers access to established regional markets and Indian Ocean trade routes. Harare remains its principal commercial centre, while Bulawayo retains a strong industrial and engineering heritage.

The economic backdrop is also becoming more encouraging. The World Bank estimates that gross domestic product expanded by 7.5% in 2025, up from 1.7% in 2024,



africa country profile

Further investment is taking shape at Kamativi in Matabeleland North. Kamativi Mining Company, working with China's Yahua Group, is developing a lithium sulphate facility incorporating a smelter and sulphuric acid plant.

More than \$200-million is being invested in the project, which is designed to produce 75 000 t/y of lithium sulphate and is expected to be commissioned in 2027.

These projects demonstrate the scale of the industrial ecosystem developing around battery metals, and the potential stainless steel demand attached to it. Lithium processing involves corrosive chemicals, elevated temperatures and demanding operating environments in which material selection is critical.

Opportunities extend to stainless steel tanks, process vessels, piping, pumps, valves, heat exchangers, ducting and acid-handling systems, as well as water-treatment equipment, laboratories and specialised maintenance. Higher-alloyed stainless steels may also be required in the most aggressive chemical environments.

Zimbabwe plans to prohibit exports of unprocessed lithium concentrate from January 2027, placing pressure

“Mining remains one of Zimbabwe’s most important economic engines, but the emerging opportunity lies increasingly beyond extraction... this is particularly evident in lithium, where about \$2-billion has reportedly been invested since 2021”

supported by an agricultural rebound and stronger mining prices. Growth is expected to moderate during 2026, with forecasts generally ranging between 4.5% and 5%, which represents a comparatively strong performance within Southern Africa.

Beneficiation moves to centre stage

Mining remains one of Zimbabwe's most important economic engines, but the emerging opportunity lies increasingly beyond extraction. The government is using export restrictions, investment incentives and procurement policies to encourage local beneficiation. This is particularly evident in lithium, where about \$2-billion has reportedly been invested since 2021. Zimbabwe is Africa's leading lithium producer and an increasingly important supplier to the global battery value chain.

Prospect Lithium Zimbabwe, a subsidiary of China's Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt, has developed a lithium sulphate plant representing an investment of \$400-million. With capacity exceeding 50 000 t/y, the plant marks a significant step from exporting concentrate towards producing higher-value intermediate battery materials.



on developers to bring sufficient domestic processing capacity on line. This creates urgency for stainless steel stockists, fabricators, engineering companies and technical specialists able to support accelerated project delivery.

Steel returns to the industrial agenda

Zimbabwe's industrial ambitions are also being reshaped by the Manhize steel project in the Midlands province. The \$1.5-billion Dinson Iron and Steel Company development has begun producing reinforcing steel and is intended to become the nucleus of a wider mining, processing, fabrication and export industry.

The plant has strategic significance for a country seeking to reduce a steel import bill estimated at \$1.9-billion. Greater domestic carbon-steel production could support infrastructure, construction and mining, while broader industrial expansion should stimulate demand for fabricated stainless steel equipment and corrosion-resistant components.

There is also scope for regional suppliers to provide technical guidance on grade selection, welding, fabrication, installation and lifecycle costing. Specifying the correct stainless steel grade at the design stage will be essential to avoiding premature corrosion and costly plant downtime.

Manufacturing beyond mining

The opportunity is not confined to metals. Zimbabwe imports pharmaceutical products worth an estimated \$300-million annually, creating a strong commercial case for domestic production.

The number of operational pharmaceutical manufacturers has reportedly risen from nine to 14, supported by more than \$70-million in investment.

Demand is growing for sterile injectable medicines, vials, ampoules and other essential products.

Pharmaceutical production represents an important higher-value stainless steel market. Hygienic manufacturing requires smooth, cleanable and corrosion-resistant surfaces, creating demand for stainless steel process vessels, purified-water systems, clean-room equipment, piping, mixing tanks, heat exchangers and packaging lines.

Similar opportunities could emerge through growth in food and beverage processing, agricultural value addition and water infrastructure. In each case, stainless steel offers durability, hygienic performance and lower maintenance requirements, an important advantage in facilities where equipment reliability and lifecycle costs are critical.

Meanwhile, Sunway City, on the outskirts of Harare, is being developed as an integrated industrial, commercial and residential precinct. Its factory shells, common services and planned road, rail and communications links are intended to lower barriers for incoming manufacturers.

Opportunity tempered by risk

Zimbabwe's industrial revival is not without obstacles. Energy shortages, constrained infrastructure, foreign-currency availability, policy uncertainty and a public debt burden exceeding \$23-billion continue to affect investment decisions. Reliable project evaluation, appropriate risk-sharing and strong local partnerships remain essential.

Yet the direction of travel is difficult to ignore. Zimbabwe is attempting to turn its mineral endowment into processing capacity, factories, skilled employment and export-ready products.

For the stainless steel sector, this transition represents more than an opportunity to supply material. It creates demand for fabrication expertise, welding skills, quality assurance, material-selection advice and long-term plant support.

Zimbabwe is no longer simply a source of raw materials. It is becoming a market in which the next layer of industrial value, much of it dependent on corrosion-resistant, durable and hygienic stainless steel, is waiting to be built.



Sassda Consultancy Turns Stainless Steel Data into Industry Action

Sassda is strengthening its role as South Africa's specialist source of stainless steel market intelligence through a dedicated consultancy arm designed to turn industry data into practical commercial and trade support.

At the heart of the service is a simple need: better decisions require better information. Stainless steel businesses need credible insight into how much material is moving through the market, where it is being used, which grades are in demand and how local supply compares with imports.

Sassda Market Intelligence Specialist **Tebogo Nkwe** says the consultancy is intended to become a central point of access for this intelligence. "Accurate information allows us to generate insights that can make a measurable difference to local industry. It puts Sassda in a stronger position to help businesses understand the market and to use the available trade and regulatory instruments effectively," she reports.

A key initiative is a confidential survey of stainless steel distributors, which will gather aggregated sales and material-throughput information monthly or quarterly. Individual company data will remain confidential, but the combined results can reveal important patterns across the market.

These include the balance between imported and locally produced material, regional differences in demand, shifts in the stainless steel grades being sold, and the industries and applications driving consumption. Over time, the data could show, for example, how usage in Gauteng differs from KwaZulu-Natal and where new opportunities or areas of pressure are emerging.

The consultancy will also give companies a sector-specific resource when dealing with trade matters. Drawing

on Sassda's stainless steel expertise and its engagement with the International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC), the service can assist with market information and guidance relating to tariff applications, import rebates and tariff adjustments.

From data to intervention

Sassda's current analysis of the local hollowware market demonstrates how this model can work in practice. The project combines import volumes and declared customs values with retail prices, product specifications, stainless steel grades and local manufacturing capability.

This evidence can help establish whether imported pots, pans and other hollowware products are entering South Africa at commercially realistic values and whether they comply with local material requirements. It can also support engagement with ITAC and other authorities where there is credible evidence of dumping, misdeclaration or substandard products.

The same intelligence has value beyond regulatory action. It can help manufacturers assess demand, identify gaps in local supply, understand regional markets and make more informed investment decisions.

By combining stainless steel expertise with confidential industry data and practical trade guidance, Sassda's consultancy aims to give the sector something it has long needed: a credible, specialist information hub that converts market knowledge into better decisions, targeted interventions and new opportunities for local growth.

For more information on Sassda's Technical Consultancy Service please e-mail Tebogo@sassda.co.za

KZN Stainless steel industry proves it has drive

Sassda KwaZulu-Natal's Annual Golf Day once again demonstrated the value of taking business out of the boardroom and onto the fairway, bringing members, industry partners and stakeholders together for a lively day of competition, conversation and connection.

The event provided a relaxed but highly effective networking platform for KwaZulu-Natal's stainless steel community.

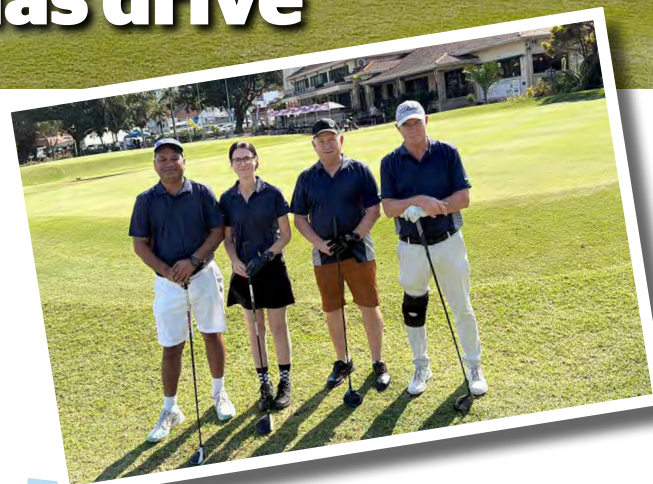
Against the backdrop of an increasingly demanding trading environment, the strong industry support was a welcome reminder that relationships remain one of the sector's most valuable assets.

The golf may have supplied the competitive edge, but the real strength of the day lay in its ability to connect people from across the stainless steel value chain. Between tee-offs, putting challenges and the occasional search for a ball with ambitions beyond the fairway, participants had an opportunity to renew established relationships, make new contacts and discuss the issues shaping the industry.

The day was made possible through the generous support of its sponsors. Sassda and the Southern African Institute of Welding supported the event, while NDE sponsored both a drinks station and the putting green. Macsteel VRN, Steelbank, Sci-Apps, Euro Steel and OCA Global ensured players remained refreshed around the course, with BAMR contributing branded banners to the occasion.

This broad sponsor participation reflected the collaborative spirit that continues to underpin the regional stainless steel sector. It also reinforced the importance of Sassda's networking events in creating opportunities for businesses to engage beyond informal meetings, particularly at a time when cooperation, market intelligence and trusted industry relationships are increasingly important.

Ultimately, the Golf Day delivered what it set out to achieve: good golf, good humour and even better business connections. Not every shot may have landed exactly where intended, but the event itself was firmly on target!





Tom Rice : farewell to a giant of the industry

The Southern African stainless steel and welding industries are mourning the passing of Tom Rice, whose remarkable career spanned more than six decades, several continents and some of the industry's leading companies. His greatest legacy, however, lies in the many people he encouraged, trained and mentored along the way.

Tom Rice's working life began at just 14, reading gas meters at the Gas Works in Perth, Western Australia, during the 1950s. His potential was soon recognised, leading to a sales position at the State Electricity Commission and the start of an enduring career in the gas and welding industries.

As a young man, Tom and two close friends sailed from Australia to Europe for a working holiday. According to family legend, their cabin carried more beer than the ship's bar, which proved useful during the hot journey through the Suez Canal. After meeting his future wife, Tom moved to South Africa in 1966 to marry her. The young family returned briefly to Australia before settling permanently in South Africa in 1975.

Tom joined Afrox, where he excelled in marketing, management and welding training. During his 22 years with the company, he also served as Manager of Harris South Africa. His success in developing the brand earned him the affectionate title "Mr Harris".

His professional development included a Marketing Diploma from the University of Cape Town and extensive international training and business travel. He visited the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Italy, while also developing markets across Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Always curious about new technology, Tom explored emerging ideas such as offshore gas projects and gas-powered vehicles. He was also an enthusiastic, largely self-taught computer user.

After Afrox, Tom joined Lincoln Electric. He spent six months at its Cleveland factory learning to weld, joined the American Marketing Association and proudly produced a metal kangaroo during his training. He later established Lincoln Electric's Johannesburg operation and attended international product training at Lincoln Electric Smitweld in the Netherlands.



Tom subsequently joined Austrian welding company Böhler, where he helped establish a highly professional welding school in Johannesburg. Training and upskilling local welders became one of his proudest achievements.

His friend of more than 40 years, Rob Lawrence, remembers Tom as "a man of the people" and "a giant in the welding industry". Although they initially worked on opposite sides of the competitive fence, Tom at Afrox and Rob at Arc Engineering and Air Liquide, they formed a lasting friendship.

"Tom mentored me and I mentored him," Rob recalls. "His contribution to this industry is immeasurable."

The two spent hours discussing projects, industry challenges and future opportunities. Tom even helped Rob choose the name Weldfindsolutions International. One of Tom's strongest beliefs was that South Africa should not overlook the knowledge of retired professionals, an idea he called "Don't Overlook Mature Experience".

A lifelong member of the Southern African Institute of Welding (SAIW) from 1977, Tom also served on numerous boards and committees, including Sassda and SAIW. He remained passionate about his life's work until retiring at 79.

Generous, kind and famously humorous, Tom freely shared the knowledge stored in his extensive welding library. He leaves an exceptional professional legacy, together with countless colleagues, friends and younger industry members whose careers he helped shape.

Those who knew him will long remember his warmth, humour and unmistakable farewell: "Bye, mate."

Les Midgley: Builder, entrepreneur, adventurer & gentleman

The South African stainless steel and aluminium industry is mourning the passing of Les Midgley, a respected entrepreneur and industry stalwart whose influence extended across the local and international metals community.

Some people leave their mark through titles or public recognition. Others leave it through the lives they touch, the businesses they build and the quiet confidence they inspire in those around them. Les belonged firmly to the latter.

For more than half a century, Les was part of South Africa's stainless steel and aluminium industry. He was known by colleagues, customers and suppliers as a man of integrity, technical understanding and unwavering dependability.

Those who worked with him remember someone whose word they could trust, whose advice was practical and whose relationships endured for decades.

Yet those who knew him best rarely spoke first about the businesses he built. They spoke instead of his calmness, kindness and remarkable ability to steady a room without ever needing to dominate it. He possessed that rare combination of quiet confidence and gentle humour that made people instinctively trust him. Whether as a colleague, business partner, husband, father, grandfather or friend, Les offered something increasingly rare: unwavering presence.

Born in Pietermaritzburg, Les entered South Africa's steel distribution industry at a time when it was beginning to evolve into the sophisticated sector we know today. He built his early career at Robor and Jackson's Metals, where he developed a deep understanding of stainless steel and aluminium distribution. It was also there that he met Elaine, originally from Kempton Park, beginning a partnership that would define both their personal lives and business careers for more than 40 years.

Like many entrepreneurs, their path was not without hardship. After leaving corporate life to establish their own business, they suffered a significant setback when their first venture failed, partly because customers they had supported did not honour their payments. For many, such an experience would have marked the end of the story. For Les and Elaine, it became the beginning.

Undaunted, they started again, founding Gammid Trading. From modest beginnings, they built it into one of South Africa's leading aluminium trading companies, with offices across the country. Their success reflected not only sound commercial judgement, but also a philosophy that relationships, technical knowledge and dependable service mattered as much as price. Customers returned because



they trusted Les, while suppliers valued the integrity with which he conducted business.

The acquisition of Gammid Trading by Argent Industrial Limited in 2007 recognised the strategic value of what Les and Elaine had built.

Les belonged to a generation of entrepreneurial metals merchants who helped shape South Africa's modern stainless steel and aluminium distribution industry. His influence was measured not by publicity, but by the respect he earned from customers, competitors and suppliers alike.

Retirement was never likely to satisfy someone with Les's boundless curiosity. In 2010, he became a founding force behind Alpha Alloys, once again applying more than four decades of knowledge to the industry he loved. Colleagues valued his technical ability and the generosity with which he shared it. Les remained happiest helping customers solve problems and mentoring those entering the industry.

Away from business, Les and Elaine shared a passion for adventure, exploring the remotest corners of Southern Africa in their trusted Land Cruiser. Lions wandering through camp, trailer wheels shearing off on lonely roads and breakdowns in remote bush country became stories to laugh about rather than reasons to stay home.

Above everything else stood family. Les leaves his beloved wife, Elaine; his daughters, Michelle and Jeanine, and their husbands, Joe and Ryan; his children with Elaine, Carla and Kyle; his sister, Denise, and her husband, Norman; nine cherished grandchildren; and numerous nephews and nieces.

Les was honourable, kind and dependable. His passing leaves a profound absence, but his greatest legacy lies not only in the companies he built, but in the lives he strengthened, the people he encouraged and the example he set. He showed that success is built on integrity, failure is never final and the quietest people often leave the deepest and most enduring mark.