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## Renewables & Energy Efficiency News South Africa: Why SA's green energy transition must include plans for waste disposal

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South Africa accelerates its transition away from coal toward renewables, but power producers must ensure they have the right systems in place to manage solar and associated storage equipment reaching the end of its life.



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According to Patricia Schröder, spokesperson for the producer responsibility organization (PRO) Circular Energy. She says it is crucial that plans to increase the use of renewable energy also cover waste management.

"Transition to sustainability cannot simply focus on how we generate energy but also across the entire energy value chain," Schröder explains.

### Renewable energy does generate waste

Over the past few years, the volume of used wind and solar power and storage equipment that needs to be disposed of, has also steadily increased. This equipment

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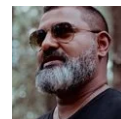


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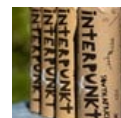


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The Renewable Energy Agency (Irena) has estimated that globally, panels used to generate solar power may create a cumulative 60 to 78 million tons of waste by 2050. Irena estimates that in South Africa, this number could reach 10 million tons by that same year.



## Renewable energy will need more investment, or Africa will stay dependent on fossil fuels

BY [ABAY YIMERE](#) 21 NOV 2022

### Renewable equipment can be recycled

Schröder says producers must use the time at their disposal to consider the best solutions for the future disposal of the equipment they install now. However, producers already have existing obligations under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Regulations, which came into effect in May 2021.

These regulations aim to ensure that producers are accountable for the entire life cycle of the products they place on the market, from conception to post-consumer waste disposal.

Schröder says South Africa does have the capacity to recycle solar and wind generation and storage equipment. Between 80% and 90% of a wind turbine can be recycled, including the concrete and steel used to build turbine towers. Similarly, the glass and aluminium frame of a solar panel makes up more than 80% of its weight and both these materials can easily be recycled. Battery storage systems of all chemistries are recycled in South Africa.

Compliance with EPR regulations will help to ensure that equipment at the end of its life cycle is channelled to the appropriately licenced facilities.



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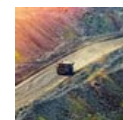
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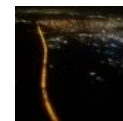


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Circular Energy wants to help producers to care for the environment through a multi-faceted, best-practice strategy, she says: "PROs like Circular Energy can offer producers advice and services to help them to comply with regulations and contribute to putting in place the concept of a circular economy that can unlock opportunities for growth and employment."

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