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**AFRISAM'S PRODUCT TESTING LABORATORY BRINGS QUALITY AND
DURABILITY TO THE CEMENT MARKET**

The shift towards civils infrastructure projects and a reduction in residential and building projects will have a marked effect on the required properties of cement.

"It is difficult to predict future trends but there is no doubt that we will see an increase in demand for the cement types that compliment high quality concrete used in infrastructural work," Mike McDonald, AfriSam's product manager for cement, tells Construction World in an exclusive interview.

"This will result in a call for a more specialised product with superior handling and placing characteristics. In many cases this should be designed for durability and extended usefulness of projects," he adds. "Clients such as SANRAL want to reduce the frequency of future maintenance and require durable concrete of the highest standard from the outset."

McDonald explains that durability indices were initially introduced by the University of Cape Town (UCT) as a way to quantify and measure the elusive concept of durability with the intent to predict the serviceable life and longevity of concrete structures. These indices are based on concrete's

permeability to oxygen and the movement of chloride ions through a disc of concrete as well as the water sorptivity of a disc of concrete.

"AfriSam's Product Laboratory is one of only a few laboratories countrywide that is set up to perform these three tests," McDonald says.

McDonald says that AfriSam has received the prestigious and sought after SANAS 17025 (South African National Accreditation Service) listing for a number of tests performed in its laboratory. "This means that customers can trust and rely on the analysis results from our laboratory.

"Accreditation is important as test results are underpinned by an independent body and subjected to regular audits to ensure the validity of the analysis," McDonalds says.

Tests that are accredited at the laboratory include concrete strength testing, mortar strength testing, and a number of instrumentation analyses including the oxide determination using the XRF (X-ray fluorescence technique).

AfriSam's Product Laboratory is situated at the Roodepoort plant and is responsible not only for quality control at the plant but also provides support services to all AfriSam's operations and to external customers. "We regularly evaluate and improve on concrete mix designs for customers. This allows

optimisation both in terms of cost and material content by finding the most appropriate solution,” McDonald adds.

“Typically a technical consultant would meet with the customer to assess the specific application requirement and from there he would initiate test work at the laboratory. Based on these results, recommendations would be given to the customer,” McDonald says. “The advantage is that this data has been validated in the laboratory and minimises risk on site by reducing any guesswork by the site personnel. This then ensures that the end product has the necessary integrity and quality is not compromised.”

McDonald points out that this is a free service to customers. “This is an integral part of our value strategy and part of our commitment to our customers. If you buy an AfriSam product we will support the product and will always assist customers to ensure that the best end result is achieved.

AfriSam is an established brand with a reputation for quality and our customers are able to build with confidence.”

McDonald explains that AfriSam is involved in ongoing product development.

“Some of our discerning customers are very aware of environmental impacts and are therefore specifying environmentally friendly types of concrete in structures.

“Many of these contracts call for readymix concrete. The AfriSam readymix business unit can provide readymix concrete solutions that would satisfy these environmentally friendly requirements. Where necessary we will work with customers to meet their specifications,” McDonald says.

McDonald says that AfriSam took the lead in producing products with the lowest possible CO₂ footprint. While not compromising on strength and durability, AfriSam used available CO₂ neutral mineral components to reduce the associated CO₂ content of cements. We continue to undertake research in this area, and product testing and development is ongoing.”

AfriSam Cement has been producing high quality A1 cement in South Africa since 1934. From its two base factories at Ulco in the Northern Cape and Dudfield in the North West Province, AfriSam cement is shipped to depots across southern Africa.

AfriSam All Purpose Cement (APC) and High Strength Cement (HSC) is specially blended and supplied as high quality, specially formulated Portland Composite Cements. Both products have been designed for use in structural, building and masonry applications.

AfriSam Rapid Hard Cement is ideal for use in the precast concrete industry, where quicker demoulding times are required as well as for fast track

construction projects to facilitate earlier stripping of formwork and faster bridge launching or higher sliding rates.

A number of AfriSam readymix products have a specific focus on product application. These include Suspended Slab Mix which is ideally suited for all slabs above ground level such as those found in high rise buildings, parkades and hollow block systems; Surfacebed Mix for floor slabs in factories, shopping centres and parking areas; Retainer Mix for all external concrete wall and other retaining applications; Foundation Mix for all non-residential foundations; and Post Tension Mix which is ideal where early strength gain is a construction requirement.

“We see our product laboratory as an important part of customer support which provides substantial benefit to our customers,” McDonald concludes.

CAPTION FOR AFRISAM 01 & 02: AfriSam’s advanced Research & Development (R&D) laboratory has received South African National Accreditation Service (SANAS) 17025 listing.

CAPTION FOR AFRISAM 03: AfriSam has been producing high quality products in South Africa since 1934.

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