

Leaders of tomorrow

Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery

When the worst drought in 100 years tightened its grip on the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town began to prepare for water rationing, utilities engineer Adri Uys was at the cutting edge of I&J's water saving efforts.

The chemical engineer joined I&J in 2016 at a time when the drought was beginning to bite and I&J was already putting considerable effort into reducing demand for water at its four business units in Cape Town. Adri was employed to drive a water demand reduction project, but as the "Day Zero" crisis escalated and the City of Cape Town announced that water supply would be cut off and a system of rationing introduced in April/May, the scope and status of the project grew.

"What started off as a utilities management project, soon grew into something that directly impacted and involved the whole organisation," explains Adri.

I&J's water demand management project resulted in a 40% reduction in average daily water usage at the company's large primary processing factory in Woodstock over a two-year period. To Adri's surprise, it wasn't the fitting of water saving devices or the adaptation of existing machinery that resulted in the biggest savings, but rather an intensive awareness-raising campaign that involved every I&J employee.

"It snowballed," says Adri of the campaign that began by closely tracking water usage at all I&J business units and providing precise feedback to managers and supervisors, and then setting goals and targets for them. "We had to look at every part of the supply chain and it was a great learning curve for me. Everyone stepped up and played a role, we really came together," she reflects.

Adri insists that the impressive water savings recorded by I&J were the result of a massive team effort, but she says her training in engineering, which taught her to closely observe systems and processes with a view to improving their efficiency, equipped her with the tools she needed to drive the water demand management project.



Adri graduated from the University of Cape Town (UCT) with a degree in chemical engineering and after an internship with the National Cleaner Production Centre of South Africa (an organisation that helps industry to lower costs by reducing energy, water and materials usage) she was hired by I&J's parent company AMI as a graduate trainee. Adri was one of seven engineers selected for the AM Graduate Trainee Programme, structured to offer selected graduates both practical on-the-job assignments (in this case at I&J) and an internationally recognised intensive Business Leadership programme run by the GIBBS institution. Being offered the opportunity at I&J was serendipitous given that Adri comes from a family with a background in fishing.

Working at I&J has given Adri insight into the difficulties of successfully managing a complex and risky fishing business. She has learned first hand how the unpredictability of the weather, fish availability and sustainability all have a profound impact on the processing and marketing of fish products to both domestic and international markets. This, together with the experience gained in managing I&J's water demand as the Day Zero crisis intensified, is invaluable and will enable her to confidently approach similar projects in the future.

"The drought was an unprecedented crisis and ex-

tremely difficult for our industry which is so dependent on water. In this industry water is not a utility, it's a raw material. I hope to apply the knowledge I've gained in every project I work on from now on," she says.

Following the success of the water demand management project, Adri is working on other initiatives aimed at reducing I&J's environmental impact. One of these is a project to improve energy efficiency. Even though there is a financial incentive to reduce electricity usage at I&J, the company is looking more broadly at its carbon footprint and working consistently to reduce the impact its operations have on the planet. This is an aspect of her job that particularly interests Adri.

In spite of the pressures of her job at I&J, Adri has continued to work towards the Masters degree she began before taking up her full-time position with the company. Her thesis on the use of computer programming to further understand the kinematic properties of certain milling devices in the mining industry is complete and, at the time that Adri spoke to *Fishing Industry News Southern Africa*, she was preparing to submit it to UCT. The submission of her thesis brings to an end several years of extremely hard work and promises to cement the career of the young engineer who has already played a key role in confronting and managing the impacts of an environmental crisis on the fishing industry.



Unlocking the value of the Cape hake resource

SADSTIA South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association