

construction

It's all in the pan

Despite the building industry being severely impacted by the economic slowdown, Pan Mixers – the largest concrete equipment manufacturer in Africa – is confident that government's re-focus on the RDP housing market will give the industry a much-needed shot in the arm. With market turnaround expected by the middle of next year, the company is gearing up to supply some of its latest product innovations, says director Walter Ebeling (right). Nelendhre Moodley reports.



Having 'definitely felt business downturn from mid-2008', Ebeling notes that industry has already experienced the worst of the economic slowdown, and, over the past few months, the rise in the number of enquiries for new products is indicative of an economy on its path to recovery.

Pressure on government to re-address the housing backlog should give a much-needed boost to the low-cost housing market, he adds.

Also, resumption of projects that occur within a 50km radius of the soccer stadia – which are expected to be shelved for the duration of the World Cup tournament – will add further impetus to the local construction industry.

In anticipation of market recovery, Pan Mixers has been busy with a number of product innovations aimed at improving efficiency, delivering larger machines for larger product batches and reducing labour requirements.

VB4X machine with topping feed.



Established in 1976, Pan Mixers manufactures equipment that makes products such as paving, bricks, blocks, roof tiles, pre-stress flooring, ready-mix and foundry-castable materials for local, African and international clients.

Ahead of the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) amended directive for paving slabs, which will be released in January next year, Pan Mixers has already improved its equipment to deliver on the requirements.

The directive on paving slabs has been altered to ensure that stones are not only strong, but also abrasion-resistant.

"We have developed equipment designed by the SABS to deliver the designed product mix," Ebeling explains.

As pavers need to have both a high breaking strength and a high abrasion resistance factor, Pan Mixers equipment has the option of two different feeder boxes on its machines – one to feed base concrete and another to fill the mould with finer concrete, the two layers are then compacted together into a single paver.

In fact, its clients are already complying with the legislation even before it has been promulgated.

Pan Mixers' product range also extends to turbine, counter-current and planetary mixers across a variety of industries, and, as a result of the popularity of its largest counter-current rapid pan mixer



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Abrasion tester.



This shows the difference between pavers which are abrasion-resistant (left), and those that are not.

– P1500 – the company is already developing a 2000-litre counter-current rapid pan mixer.

“We are developing larger machines because industry is requiring larger product batches. Larger equipment is able to mix larger concrete batches delivering better quality control and allowing for a single weigh-batching and mixing system to supply concrete to more than one machine, thus giving clients a greater competitive edge by being able to deliver work faster,” Ebeling notes.

It is anticipated that the 2000-litre counter-current rapid pan mixer will be ready for distribution by the middle of next year.

The counter-current rapid pan mixer has been extremely successful because it not only mixes well, but high-speed agitators can be added to break up material that tends to lump or ball up in the mixing process. ■