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**ZEST WEG GROUP POSITIONS ITSELF TO BECOME A REGIONAL
MANUFACTURING HUB AND CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE OF WEG**

The Zest WEG Group is positioning itself to become a regional hub of WEG, with subsidiary company Shaw Controls “set to become the number one panel builder and systems integrator in Africa,” Louis Meiring, CEO of the Zest WEG Group says. This forms part of the Group’s overall strategy to ramp up its automation and electrical systems business significantly, which has seen Valter Luiz Knihs from WEG appointed as Group Automation & Systems Director.

“I am very happy to join the team in South Africa and to assist Shaw Controls in particular in delivering full package solutions,” Knihs says. “The strategic focus is for Africa and the Americas to have regional Centres of Excellence in terms of systems manufacture and integration that will service WEG globally. We are working hard on adding more products, having clear pricing and delivery times. It is important for the Zest WEG Group as a whole to become internationally competitive as we strive to achieve the global targets of WEG.”

Meiring explains further: “WEG’s manufacturing operations are not purpose-built to only service one particular area. It is our aim that all the Zest WEG Group’s manufacturing operations will become Centres of Excellence accredited by WEG to be able to manufacture any product designed by the group for application anywhere in the world.”

“Therefore Shaw Controls will not only be building panels for the local market. For example, WEG could receive an order out of Australia and deem it best that the manufacturing be carried out in South Africa. What this means ultimately is full international accreditation for all of our manufacturing facilities, from Shaw Controls to WEG Transformers Africa (WTA).”

Knihs adds: “WEG is committed to being at the forefront of any new standards and regulations, and is in compliance with all certification wherever it operates. This is critical for health and safety considerations, both from a personnel and equipment point of view, which our latest manufacturing techniques take into account.”

The corollary is that “any of the WEG global operations will be able to approach us from a project management, engineering design or manufacturing point of view. The Zest WEG Group wants to be in a position not only to be able to offer that international level of service and support, but also to have the skill set to be able to do so. It is a huge opportunity not only for us as a business, but for South Africa as a whole,” Meiring comments.

The Zest WEG Group is investing significantly in skills development and training as a result. “We have traditionally been more of a distributor than a manufacturer, but over the last five to ten years we have entered into the manufacturing space. This has meant a steep learning curve for us in terms of developing a full skill set in house, from sales to engineering and manufacturing. The Zest WEG Group has responded to this challenge in a very positive manner and has a fully fledged Training Centre and programmes in place,” Meiring says.

The Zest WEG Group is also able to draw on the considerable resources of WEG in this regard, with Knihs having a team of 70 engineers in Brazil hard at work on the Shaw Controls optimisation and upgrade programme. “We are very excited about the opportunities this presents to raise the bar in terms of skills development in South Africa as a whole,” Meiring says. For example, an engineering manager from WTA recently underwent a two-week training programme in Brazil.

Knihs adds that WEG has also earmarked three local technical schools to enhance the education and training on offer. “We are in negotiations with the management of these institutions so that at the end of the day we have a good pool of technicians to draw on. The areas of electrics, electronics and software are all converging in terms of engineering. This means we will need a highly specialised skill set in the near future, and we are keen to work with these local institutions to nurture this in South Africa.”

Although the focus of the Zest WEG Group is complete packages, Meiring says this is not in competition to Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractors. “Many of these are our customers. It is more about how we are aligning our business to be able to add value in terms of selling solutions. We want to be a ‘one stop’ shop in terms of meeting the full electrical needs for our customers.”

The decision to upgrade Shaw Controls was as a result of “some limitations we have identified in terms of manufacturing, which are essentially around the capacity and size of our facility. The reality

we are faced with is that the existing facility needs to grow or for there to be a new one,” Meiring says. Knihs explains that he is adopting a three-pronged strategy, namely adding new products (for example 31 kA/15 kV MV switchgear and LV 690 V withdrawable MCCs), increasing productivity and improving quality. “By the early part of 2015 we will have achieved a high level of product and efficiency improvement. We are moving towards the level of being an international supplier.”

WEG is at the forefront of the latest best practices in manufacturing technology. “We are fortunate in that we do not have to start from scratch at Shaw Controls as a result. Our biggest challenge is how to adapt our own manufacturing processes in turn, which has a lot to do with the equipment you have.” The Zest WEG Group sees this as a major opportunity, and is gearing up for significant investment in the latest technology.

Looking to the future, Meiring sees exponential growth for all the other companies in the Zest WEG Group. “We are already taking very clear steps in terms of our long term strategy to enter new markets. This is evident by us adding to the product range of Shaw Controls, which means it will be able to access sectors that it could not enter previously, such as oil and gas or medium voltage. There are areas where we have not been strong historically, but now with our enhanced product and service portfolio, we are starting to be far better positioned to be able to enter such markets, which have major potential in Africa.”

WEG UPDATE MINING INDABA PIC 01: Louis Meiring, CEO of the Zest WEG Group (left) and Valter Luiz Knihs, newly appointed Group Automation & Systems Director.

WEG UPDATE MINING INDABA PIC 02: The Zest WEG Group is investing significantly in skills development and training.

WEG UPDATE MINING INDABA PIC 03: The Zest WEG Group aims to be a ‘one stop’ shop for meeting its clients’ electrical needs.

WEG UPDATE MINING INDABA PIC 04: The Zest WEG Group has taken a strategic decision to upgrade the existing Shaw Controls facility.

WEG UPDATE MINING INDABA PIC 05: The WEG Transformers Africa (WTA) transformer manufacturing facility in Wadeville, Johannesburg.

WEG UPDATE MINING INDABA PIC 06: A WEG motor in a genset application.

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