

SKF SA celebrates 110 years of optimising rotational assets

Established in 1914 by Swedish Holding Company, SKF AB, SKF South Africa is proudly celebrating its rich 110 year heritage of delivering premium value solutions to customers across South and Southern Africa.



SKF Jet Park JHB head office where the Remanufacturing and TBU Centres are housed.

The first SKF subsidiary on the African continent, then known as SKEFKO (South Africa) Ball Bearing Company Limited, was established in Pritchard Street, Johannesburg in 1914. It has since evolved from a bearings and engineering services supplier into a developer of innovative products and advanced technologies that seamlessly integrate with the digital era to meet the rigorous demands of modern day industry.

Today, SKF SA leads the South and Southern African market as an OEM supplier of bearings, seals, power transmission and lubrication products, supported by professional mechanical engineering and remanufacturing services. These state-of-the-art product and technology solutions are widely used within around 40 market sectors across the region, including mining, materials handling, automotive (passenger and commercial vehicles), solar and wind energy, railways, machine tools, medical, food & beverage and the paper industries.

Several important developments and milestones during SKF South Africa's distinguished 110-year history include:

- The relocation in 2019 of its Jet Park, Johannesburg headquarters to larger, purpose-built premises to accommodate future development and growth. The design of the new building, also situated in Johannesburg's prominent Jet Park industrial area, aligns with SKF's net

zero drive: the building's 383 kWp solar system delivers approximately 30% more than the company's average electricity needs, with the warehouse, workshops, offices, logistics, and more, essentially operating completely off-grid from 08h30 to around 16h30. Being a grid-tied system, energy is not stored in batteries onsite. However, SKF ensures that the excess electricity is not going to waste by feeding it back to the Municipality – free of charge.

- 2023 Earmarked the launch of SKF's Circular Economy Centre – previously known as the SKF Solutions Factory – as well as the TBU Bearing Refurbishment Centre. With the deliberate intention of making a meaningful contribution to sustainability, the Circular Economy Centre comprises an organic collection of SKF services. The Centre houses a combination of quality circular economy products and service solutions, including SKF's Bearing Remanufacturing Centre, Project Engineering, seal manufacturing services, RecondOil and a range of Onsite Services.
- Machine efficiency and reliability are sustainability game changers. Through the provision of innovative designs, superior quality products, advanced technologies, connected lubrication systems, state-of-the-art condition monitoring, data analytics and machine

learning, SKF engineers increase mean time between failures (MTBF), extend machine longevity and lower energy consumption for customers.

- Reducing, reusing and recycling are key elements of sustainability and here too SKF South Africa leads the market. Pivotal here is SKF's specialist Bearing Remanufacturing Centre which, established in 2008, gives high-value bearings a second, third and even fourth life. Reusing rather than replacing keeps customers' costs down, and reduces lead times and material consumption. Moreover, bearings not eligible for remanufacture can be recycled to produce new bearings, effectively closing the loop. SKF's remanufactured bearings and units conform to the same quality specifications as new SKF bearings and units.
- SKF South Africa now has a competitive edge when it comes to its comprehensive product portfolio of bearings and bearing units, axle boxes, bearing mounting/dismounting equipment, lubrication, and condition monitoring solutions for the rail segment. The establishment of the TBU Centre further elevates SKF's value chain and unlocks the tremendous potential presented by this important transport sector on the African continent.

Along with premium quality product and service solutions, steadfast customers, a dedicated distributor network and a committed

SKF team of employees continue to drive the SKF success story. Since the appointment of its first distributor in 1970, SKF South Africa has gone on to develop a strategic network of authorised independent industrial distributors – along with lubrication, commercial vehicle and agricultural distributors – in South Africa and neighbouring countries in a bid to deliver engineering, product and service solutions to customers' doorsteps.

SKF invests in long-term customer partnerships, delivering ever more advanced and energy efficient solutions that support the company's strong narrative of optimising the performance, life, reliability and efficiency of customers' rotating assets. Not only defined by the quality of its products and services, the company's core values – empowerment; high ethics; diversity and inclusion – and team-work drive SKF employees' decision-making



Left: SKF South Africa, originally founded in 1914, is proudly celebrating its rich 110 year heritage. Right: SKF South Africa is an OEM leader in bearings and rotating equipment technologies in South and Southern Africa.



processes and interactions both internally and with customers and distributors. With an unblemished reputation for excellence in products and services SKF South Africa looks to the future, keeping in step with market trends and requirements, ready to unpack the African continent's vast potential, and continuing to hone its products, technologies,

services, experience, knowledge, capabilities and competencies. In so doing, SKF ensures that it continues to deliver the right solutions that are aligned with a dynamic, rapidly developing industrial and digital landscape to future proof customers' competitiveness and business sustainability.

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Smart lubrication management solutions from SKF

With the technological advancements of agricultural equipment to meet the increasing demands for higher efficiencies, performance and reliability, as well as reduced emissions, tolerances are becoming ever finer. This can lead to increased component wear so maintaining a proper lubricant film is essential to reliability.

SKF has developed a sophisticated range of lubricants and application systems that address these requirements by delivering a maximum machine and equipment life cycle and reduced costs of operation.

Agricultural machines and equipment are subjected to extremely stringent conditions, working in an environment where the ingress of dust, dirt, stones, mud, plant material and water cause excessive wear and tear on critical components. This can potentially lead to equipment failure. Farmers have a very limited window for planting and harvesting, and unexpected breakdowns in the field can result in reduced or poor yields.

"Taking into account that 56% of bearing failures are caused by contamination and inadequate lubrication, the importance of farm machinery lubrication can never be underestimated," says Charl Engelbrecht, SKF's key accounts manager for Agriculture. "Add to this the fact that, while lubricants amount to between 2 and 3% of running costs in agricultural machines, 40 to 60% of maintenance costs are a result of poor lubrication."

A correctly executed proactive maintenance strategy can help prevent breakdowns, reduce downtime, optimise performance, reliability and efficiencies, extend equipment lifecycle, lower maintenance costs, enhance safety, and meet environmental compliance.

It involves the systematic application and control of lubricants to reduce friction, heat and wear between moving parts, ultimately reducing the risk of failures and subsequent costly downtime. SKF offers holistic lubrication solutions for tractors, implements, trailers, combine harvesters, special harvesting machines, balers, sprayers, slurry tankers, and more. The product range includes lubrication delivery products and systems as well as a selection of high quality lubricants.

"It starts with the correct choice of lubricant because this carries as much importance as applying the correct lubrication methods," stresses Engelbrecht. With years of experience with bearings, lubricants and applications as well as through continuous research, field-testing and validation, SKF has developed the right lubricants specifically suited for agri equipment. The special formulation of SKF LGGB 2 biodegradable, low toxicity, synthetic ester oil based grease, using a lithium-calcium thickener, makes it most suitable for agri applications where environmental contamination is commonplace. "Our LFFM 100 high-performance synthetic chain oil is specially formulated for the lubrication of chains operating in agriculture industries," adds Engelbrecht. SKF offers manual, semi- and fully automated lubrication delivery systems that assist farmers with correct and accurate lubrication. Products include compact electric cartridge pumps, grease nipples, grease guns, lubricant hoses, progressive metering devices as well as a range of accessories. Engelbrecht explains that proper manual lubrication usually takes about 15 to 20 minutes per machine and maintenance cycle. "Failure to properly lubricate

each lubrication point on every machine can negatively impact schedules, maintenance costs and running time performance. For this reason we recommend automatic lubrication of agri equipment as farmers will benefit from increased equipment availability and improved uptime."

Adding further value to its lubrication portfolio, SKF has developed two apps: SKF LubeSelect accesses a knowledge base to assist farmers with selecting an appropriate lubricant for a particular application. SKF eLube enables users to determine lubricant levels and pump functions remotely. SKF's lubrication solutions are bolstered by professional service and after-sales support delivered by a team of highly trained product specialists. SKF builds long-term partnerships, engaging with farmers to determine the best, tailored lubrication solution for each agri application.

"Smart lubrication management that incorporates SKF products, systems and lubricants, is an essential part of agri equipment operation and maintenance and can make a significant contribution to farming sustainability and profitability," concludes Engelbrecht.

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SKF offers holistic lubrication solutions for enhanced agricultural equipment reliability.