

Media Release

06 February 2020

For immediate release:

SAASTA hosts the first Nanotechnology Symposium on Health, Safety and Environment

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) and the Nanotechnology Public Engagement Programme (NPEP), in-collaboration with the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), will be hosting the first Nanotechnology Symposium on Health, Safety and Environment on 10 February 2020 at the SAASTA Auditorium in Pretoria.

The Nanotechnology Symposium on Health, Safety and Environment aims to promote and encourage responsible development of nanotechnology in South Africa. The symposium will provide a platform for policy or decision makers, regulators, industry, scientists, researchers, experts and science communication practitioners to discuss the sustainable development of nanotechnology in the country.

South Africa is one of the few countries that have adopted Nanotechnology with the intention of improving global competitiveness and sustainable economic growth. According to a review of the National Nanotechnology Strategy, even though the adoption of Nanotechnology in South Africa is still in the initial stage, it has made considerable strides in the past years.

This has led to the manufacturing of engineered nanomaterials on varying scales for research, development and industrial purposes aimed at contributing solutions to South Africa's development challenges.

NPEP is mandated by the DSI to recognise the importance of an informed public in making decisions on nanotechnology innovations and to improve the quality of life. Moreover, they emphasise the importance of identifying and discussing the potential risks associated with nanotechnology, and mitigating those risks.

The one-day event includes participants from industry and academia, with local nanotechnology experts set to address the event. The objectives of the discussions are:

- To discuss HSE policy and the regulatory environment conducive for the sustainable development of nanotechnology and the role of the Nano code of conduct.
- To discuss the latest research relating to the potential risks of nanomaterials to occupational health, safety and the environment.
- To discuss the role of science communicators in promoting balanced and fact-based understanding of nanotechnology, especially in a 'post-truth' era.
- To explore responsible research and innovation or 'upstream public engagement' as a broad policy to better align science and society, as integral to innovation in nanotechnology.

Ends

Date: Monday, 10 February 2020

Time: 08:00-16:30

Venue: SAASTA's Auditorium, 211 Nana Sita Street, Pretoria.

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About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa. SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic

knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programmes within the NRF, please visit www.saasta.ac.za

About the National Research Foundation (NRF):

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.nrf.ac.za

About the Nanotechnology Public Engagement Programme (NPEP):

The Nanotechnology Public Engagement Programme is an initiative funded by the Department of Science and Technology and implemented by the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA), a business unit of the National Research Foundation. NPEP provides information to enhance the public's knowledge and understanding of nanotechnology. It also strives to enable informed decision-making on nanotechnology innovations to improve the quality of life. NPEP assists in the translation of academic research in nanotechnology for the consumption of the public, industry and the policy makers. For more information on the programme please visit <https://bit.ly/37T8OQ9>