LSFB gets the green light from government

At the Southern African Light Steel Frame Building Association’s (SASFA) recent industry feedback meeting, CSIR principal researcher, Building Science and Technology Dept, Llewellyn van Wyk (left), said that, in principle, Innovative Building Technologies (IBT), including Light Steel Frame Building (LSFB), have been accepted by government for use in the construction of government-owned structures.

According to CSIR’s research, IBTs offer faster construction, lower costs, improved energy efficiencies, better quality control, provide decent jobs, and have a smaller impact on resources and the environment.

“Accordingly it is no wonder that the PICC (Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission) has decided to promote the use of IBTs, specifically for schools, clinics and student accommodation,” said SASFA director, John Barnard.

“Within three years, some 60% of new buildings in these categories will be supplied using IBTs, which is excellent news for the light steel framing industry.”

Van Wyk added that, using Agrement SA’s standards, there are currently about 40 IBTs active in South Africa and in terms of efficiency, using the CSIR rating system, the ‘standard’ brick house rated 32nd out of 40. “Because of the significant savings in energy and of the life-time costs of ownership, LSFB and other IBT-built houses and other structures are growing exponentially worldwide and South Africa is no exception,” says Van Wyk.

SASFA current chairman, ArcelorMittal’s Hannes Basson, said that the LSFB industry had made great strides since 2007 and that SASFA had played a major role in this progress. “While this building method has been strong in many other countries including Australia, the US and Europe, it was regarded with some scepticism locally. But through SASFA’s education and promotional initiatives LSFB has become an accepted IBT in this country. For example, in 2007 it was impossible to get a bond for a LSFB building and now most of the major banks have bought into the technology,” Basson said.

Local examples of the increasing number of high-profile LSFB users abound. One is McDonald’s South Africa, which is changing the way it builds its restaurants and has embarked on rolling-out sustainable LSFB restaurants across the country.

“The new restaurants are built using light steel frames (LSF) and energy-efficient cladding and insulation systems. This decision stems from our philosophy to support sustainable building methods as far as design, energy efficiency and the optimal use of natural light is concerned,” says Greg Solomon, McDonald’s South Africa’s MD.

By using LSFB on this building, material wastage was reduced by 30%, transport costs by 80% and the carbon footprint was significantly reduced. On top of this, McDonald’s was able to cut back the construction period required, opening these outlets four months earlier than if more traditional building methods were used.