

MONTHLY ZCA CLEANTECH NEWS



The Cleantech Insight You Need

January 2026

Vol. 12



ZCA Cleantech Awards 2025 Winners Announced!

Recognising trailblazers driving the world's transition to net zero – from renewable energy and AI to circular materials and clean manufacturing.

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Editor's note

2025 brought sweeping change across the sustainability space, mixing climate shocks with signs of real progress.

Whilst several governments eased off on their climate commitments, raising concerns for long-term progress, these shifts did not derail the strong rise of cleantech. The industry saw a wave of new technologies emerge from a rapidly growing market. In addition, the ZCA Cleantech Awards 2025 showcased the pioneers reshaping our sustainable future.

These trends are reflected in this month's newsletter, with news that the EU has U-turned on a 2035 petrol and diesel car ban. Contrastingly Japan has announced policy to drive clean energy uptake, and data from IRENA reveals record levels of global investment have flowed into clean energy.

As we step into a new year, keep an eye on your inbox for the ZCA Top Trends for 2026 report. It explores five important sustainability shifts shaping the months ahead and offers useful direction for anyone working in this fast-moving field.

ZCA'S 2025 IN REVIEW



As outlined in our annual review, 2025 was a transformative year. While political pushback slowed progress on net-zero goals, innovation kept driving change. Cleantech spending reached new highs, with investment rising by 15% year-on-year. This led to breakthroughs ranging from regenerative farming partnerships to major carbon-removal deals. Progress in direct air capture, biomanufacturing and green hydrogen added further momentum, while standout achievements like the Ofwat Water Breakthrough Challenge and the Earthshot Prize kept the focus on solutions.

ENERGY TRANSITION SEES RECORD INVESTMENT FLOWS

IRENA has reported a record-breaking \$2.4 trillion poured into the global energy transition, powered by booming solar growth and strong investment in renewables, grids and battery storage.

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JAPAN OFFERS SUBSIDIES TO DRIVE CLEAN ENERGY UPTAKE



Japan is set to incentivise the uptake of clean energy, offering \$1.3 billion in investment subsidies as the nation looks to accelerate decarbonisation and meet its renewable energy targets. The new programme will launch in 2026 and will run for 5 years, applying to commercial and industrial companies that utilise clean energy and contribute to regions where the power is generated. Subsidies will cover as much as half of capital expenditure, and data centre developers meeting the criteria will also be eligible.

EU U-TURNS ON PETROL AND DIESEL CAR BAN

The European Commission has published proposals to scrap the 2035 ban on petrol and diesel vehicles, instead replacing this with a requirement to meet a 90% tailpipe emissions reduction target. Under review is the 2035 zero emissions legislation introduced in 2023, which would have effectively banned the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles from 2035 onwards.



► SPOTLIGHT: BIONOVA



Lauren Foye, Head of Market Research & Consultancy at ZCA recently spoke with BioNova, winners of ZCA's 2025 Cleantech Rising Star Award.

The Georgian start-up operates in a region where cleantech ecosystems are still emerging, exemplifying grassroots innovation driving climate resilience from the ground up. As such we wanted to hear more about BioNova's pioneering technology and how the company is empowering farmers to turn agricultural waste into energy.

Agricultural organic waste poses a major burden on farmers, with the pressure of storage requirements, high disposal costs, and regulatory restrictions. However, it is also a significant untapped resource, where BioNova aims to unlock its potential using pioneering compact, IoT-enabled biogas systems that transform organic waste into clean energy and nutrient-rich fertiliser.

Click here to find out more and access the interview.