JODY SCHECKTER’S BOLD FARM-2-FORK ADVENTURE

BRAZIL’S CHICKEN SHOCK FOR SA: Why we must get tough on testing

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The disruptors are camping on your stoep

I spent a day at Africa’s Big 7 show at Gallagher recently, winding through the aisles trying to spot the next big thing.

The show undoubtedly has its challenges: the usual ghetto of unpersoned Chinese stands decorated (if one can use the word) with a single poster press-sticked crookedly to the back wall and written in Mandarin; too many stands from countries like Turkey and Poland with packaged products labelled in their own languages only; or the half a dozen exhibitors from Sri-Lanka all side by side offering identical coconut products.

Generally, the show reflected the limp state of the economy and I suspect the organisers battled bravely to curate a diverse and exciting showcase under such gloomy conditions. One has to take a deep breath and soldier on. Tomorrow will be better.

If there was one stand-out moment for me, it was a panel discussion on the surging local demand for home delivered meals from the likes of Uber Eats, UCook and Orderin.

The disruptive energy of the panellists was palpable. Listening to them talk animatedly about the challenges of home delivery, the power of convenience and the relentless emphasis on service ... was like being at a dotcom startup conference in Silicon Valley.

It reminded me of a recent foodtech event I attended in Tel Aviv where the passion and vision of the speakers about the future of food in the digital age was contagious.

At the Big 7 panel discussion, here were young, smart people bubbling with big, bold ideas. It was a wake-up call for the old school in the foodbev sector: the disruptors are camping on your doorstep; the Millennials are stealing your lunch by opting out of (supermarket) shopping and opting instead for convenience.

We’ll be covering this story closely in upcoming issues.

Bruce Cohen
editor@fbreporter.co.za
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In a gorgeous, Afro-stylish example of design-meets-decadence, fashion icon Laduma Ngxokolo, left, whose MaXhosa knitwear brand has become a global sensation, recently teamed up with Unilever’s Magnum ice cream to produce a limited edition luxury chocolate selection. Consumers who purchase two Magnums can win one of the designer choc boxes in a whatsapp competition.

In a gorgeous, Afro-stylish example of design-meets-decadence, fashion icon Laduma Ngxokolo, left, whose MaXhosa knitwear brand has become a global sensation, recently teamed up with Unilever’s Magnum ice cream to produce a limited edition luxury chocolate selection. Consumers who purchase two Magnums can win one of the designer choc boxes in a whatsapp competition.

If you thought the anti-fur brigade was ruthless, watch out for the vegans! Butchers in France have written to the interior minister to ask for protection against violence and intimidation from vegans.

The appeal comes after several butcher shops were vandalised and sprayed with fake blood in northern France earlier this year, with similar, isolated incidents reported elsewhere.

As in other Western countries, eating habits are changing rapidly in traditionally carnivorous France where non-meat food options were once difficult to find on restaurant menus.

Vegetarianism and veganism have gained in popularity, leading to falling meat sales, while the animal rights movement is an increasingly visible presence in the media, led by campaigning actress Brigitte Bardot.

In their letter to the minister, the butcher’s group accuses vegans of “wanting to impose on the immense majority of people their lifestyle, or even their ideology”.

Faced with declining meat sales, farmer’s groups have effectively lobbied the government to protect their interests. A recent proposal to require schools to introduce a vegetarian meal at least once a week was dropped, while meat producers have pressured the parliament to ban the use of terms like “steak”, “fillet”, “bacon” or “sausage” on meat-like vegan products.

Fifty percent of edible agricultural production is wasted due to specification requirements, cold-chain and processing inadequacies as well as access to markets. This nutritious food goes to waste while 14 million South Africans go hungry every day.

To combat this, local foodbank NGO, FoodForward SA, has launched a programme called Second Harvest that collects surplus fruit and vegetables from commercial farmers across the country and redistributes the fresh produce to the 600 beneficiary organisations in their network.

Established in 2009 to address widespread hunger in South Africa, FoodForward SA “connects a world of excess to a world of need” by recovering surplus food from the consumer goods supply chain.

The organisation has partnered with leading SA food companies to build its foodbank network, including Pick n Pay, Nestle, Albany, RCL, Shoprite and others.

FoodForward SA says its foodbank reaches up to 250 000 people daily at the cost of R0.79 per meal. Beneficiary organisations include orphanages, places of safety, creches, disability and aged care NGOs, skills and youth development groups.

The Second Harvest allows farmers to donate their post-harvest surpluses while they are harvesting, to ensure the food does not go to waste.

FoodForward SA is working with a network of farmers located in the Western Cape, Gauteng, and Durban to improve the nutrition level of the food provided to beneficiaries.

According to Managing Director of FoodForward SA, Andy Du Plessis, “dedicated refrigerated vehicles go directly to our farmers to collect fresh fruit and vegetables while they are harvesting. This fresh produce meaningfully increases the nutritional value of the food distributed, as well as volume, which significantly increases the number of people we are able to reach.”

FoodForward SA says foodbanking is the most effective solution at present to reducing hunger, and reducing food waste is the third most effective solution in fighting climate change.

The Second Harvest programme will ensure that more agricultural production is redistributed to the hungry. FoodForward SA (and this magazine) encourages farmers, growers, food processors, and other supply chain stakeholders to partner with them and join the food recovery revolution.

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SECOND HARVEST PUTS SA’s FOOD WASTE TO WORK

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CLOVER DIVES INTO RTE MARKET

Clover has made an ambitious foray out of its traditional dairy and beverage markets into convenience foods. Its new offering in the Ready to Eat (RTE) category is a range of meals branded the Whistling Chef.

The range offers not only tasty, fresh convenience but also extended shelf life thanks to being packaged using a new FreshVacSeal™ pasteurisation technology.

The Whistling Chef is an apt name – the packs actually whistle in the microwave when they’re perfectly heated. The packaging also incorporates an innovative “tray plate” for easy eating and a first-to-market “no-pierce” film.

“We know what a struggle it is for families, moms who want to take the night off, and executives and students to rustle up a dinner that is nutritious, containing real, fresh ingredients that is ready in just a few minutes. It’s for this exact reason that we’ve created The Whistling Chef range,” says marketing manager at Clover, Mone Gerryts, who adds: “Made with only the best and freshest ingredients, the range contains real Clover cheese, milk, butter and cream to ensure a quality product.”

The offering has launched with five initial variants including Creamy Macaroni & Cheese; Cottage Pie; Creamy Alfredo; Beef Lasagne and Spaghetti Bolognaise. The meals are preservative- and colourant-free.

CLOVER Dives INTO RTE MARKET

Coca-Cola Strips Naked in Japan

Only weeks after releasing the Coca-Cola Co’s first alcoholic drink, the company’s Japanese business last month launched Coca-Cola Clear, a zero-kJ sparkling drink that includes a “splash of lemon”, sweeteners and caffeine.

The drink is only available in Japan. Such Japan-only launches are not new for Coca-Cola, as the unit released about 100 new products into the market in 2016 alone.

Packaging for Coca-Cola Clear combines the company’s distinctive red logo with a bottle and label that are clear.

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Jody Scheckter, our Formula One GP champion way back in 1979, had a reputation as being the “world’s most dangerous racing driver”. While he may have left the adrenalin rush of the track behind him when launching a new career in food, there has been no shortage of risk along the way.

He has become a pioneer of organic and biodynamic farming, and is well-known internationally for high-end products produced on his Laverstoke Park Farm in the rolling hills of Hampshire in the English countryside.

Scheckter has become a David of sorts, taking on national and multi-national food and beverage (alcohol) Goliaths at their own game. He hasn't always beaten them, but he continues to give them a good run for their money. And he has been extraordinarily successful in some sectors. Despite that, overall commercial viability has eluded him – until now.

It helps that Scheckter has also been ahead of his time in aligning his products with one of the most dominant trends in food and beverage markets globally: the “clean food” movement. It’s an integral part of the health and wellness trend that has seeped into the food landscape.

Scheckter was leading the clean food movement long before it was even a morsel in the minds of foodbev producers and consumers alike. It was high on his menu when he first set out to be a gentleman organic and biodynamic farmer in the UK in 1997.

Scheckter readily admits that when he started out in farming, he thought he knew it all. In truth, “I really had no idea what I was doing,” he says. He also turned a deaf ear to anyone who told him that he was crazy and spreading himself too thinly.

That has seen him take detours, twists, turns, dead ends and brave new roads in his new career. And he has learned to listen and tune in to criticism.

At one stage, Scheckter had more than 120 high-end foodbev products listed with Ocado, the British online-only supermarket. His products were also available in high-end retail outlets, Waitrose among them, and included organic, biodynamic meat and dairy products as well as sparkling wines, ales
On the surface, it looked like he was succeeding beyond his wildest dreams. But the stringency of biodynamic farming’s ethical practices made for especially tough economics.

It was only last year, a decade after he started, that for the first time, says Scheckter, he did not have to put any money into the business. The outlook for this year is even better.

To reach that milestone, Scheckter says he has had to embark on the "r’s": rationalising, restructuring and retrenching for the past three years. He has also pruned and trimmed elements and businesses that were inefficient or losing money.

Before that, Scheckter had a staff of 180 working in different factories and divisions on his farm, producing a wide range of organic products. Among these, he established a laboratory, a mozzarella factory, an abattoir, a butcher shop and a 7-acre purpose-built composting site. Apart from his popular organic, biodynamic buffalo mozzarella, he was also well-known for his meat products produced on site, that included burgers, meatballs and different kinds of biltong.

At the same time, he was learning brutal but vital business lessons. One is that the best food products don’t always sell. In other words, volume really is key. “It doesn’t matter how good or expensive your products are, and even if you have customers willing to pay a premium, you need the volume.”

He learned about the tough meat market. Not surprisingly, with his racing background, motor vehicle analogies are always on the tip of his tongue.

“When you produce a car,” Scheckter says, “you bring 1 000 pieces together to make one product that you can sell for a significant profit. In an abattoir, when you bring in one animal, you cut it into 1 000 pieces and make most from its hind quarter - that’s when you manage to sell a few pieces. And you often lose money because the margins are so small.”

The changes he has implemented are finally bearing fruit. As of late 2017, with significantly trimmed staff numbers to well below 80, Laverstoke Farm no longer produces meat and meat products for sale to the public. The wild boar have gone and the animals are down to a reduced buffalo herd, sheep and some cattle.

Scheckter has also drastically culled his product range and retained only the flagship products that are money spinners. His buffalo mozzarella retains pride of place – it won an award in competition with a top Italian producer. He has also retained his innovative line of buffalo ice creams. Scheckter has wisely dropped smaller products, including some buffalo blue cheeses, a bree and a planned ricotta.

And despite acquiring permission for establishing a winery on the farm, Scheckter chose not to pursue it. “It was a massively big project. Thank goodness I didn’t go for it.”

The same applied to plans for a brewery on his premises to produce his ales and lagers on site. He dropped that idea at the last minute as it “didn’t really make commercial sense”. His beer product was small, relatively speaking, Scheckter says. Even though it won awards, it was operating in a difficult market.

On reflection, Scheckter says that all the products he has launched and markets he has entered had the potential.
for success. However, one of the biggest stumbling blocks he has faced is “difficulty finding entrepreneurs, never mind managers, to translate them all into commercially-viable success stories”.

The business challenges he has faced are as much a function of Scheckter’s intensely competitive nature as of market and trend drivers. And whichever way you look at it, he has travelled a long and winding road since he bought his first 530 acres to set up Laverstoke Park Farm in 1997. He acquired the farm next door that gave him 2,500 acres as his playground for realisation of his dream of producing clean, healthy food.

Scheckter’s original idea was just to produce the best-tasting, healthiest food “without compromise” for himself and his family. It wasn’t long before he felt driven to share his products with the wider world in the UK. And the “best-tasting, healthiest food without compromise” became his business mantra and mission.

Of course, he knew that his business wasn’t going to be an overnight success. And one reason he has been able to weather the hard economic times for so long is that organic, biodynamic farming is Scheckter’s third career.

After he retired from Formula 1 racing at the age of 30, he went to live in the USA in the early 1980s. He started a small business he called FATS (Firearms Training Systems) Inc on his kitchen table in Atlanta. FATS was a company building firearms training simulators for military, law enforcement and security organizations. It proved a phenomenal success.

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FATS was eventually sold in 35 different countries, had 95% of the world market before Scheckter decided to sell and settle in the UK in 1997, using the FATS profits to acquire Laverstoke and he started to turn it into a centre of excellence for organic and biodynamic farming that it remains today.

Scheckter says the idea of going into organic farming had been germinating for years. While still living in the US, he began doing extensive research into organic and biodynamic farming.

He knew about the stringent and time-consuming regulations required for organic certification from the Soil Association, the UK’s leading organic certifier, and succeeded in being certified with relative ease. He also acquired Demeter biodynamic certification – named after Demeter (the Greek goddess of fertility).

The Demeter biodynamic standard goes far beyond what most farmers, food producers, retailers and consumers typically regard as “organic”. The Demeter protocol was written in Germany in 1928 by the polymath genius Rudolf Steiner, originator of the philosophy of Anthroposophy.

Steiner codified his research into harmonious and sustainable (bio-dynamic) farming practices into a strict certification program for the highest quality, sustainable agriculture. Steiner’s work has proven to be historically significant because it dates back to the beginning of the modern sustainable farming movement. And because it captures key agronomic principles that even the most stringent organic certification systems do not comprehensively address.

Scheckter follows to the letter all the dictates and philosophy of organic and biodynamic farming. That begins with the health of the soil – and the understanding that “a handful of soil has more living organisms than there are people on planet Earth”.

“Soil is 90% of farming,” Scheckter says. “If you can maintain and build a healthy soil, most problems will go away.”

Biodiversity and a mix of livestock and crops are another key element of a healthy, natural farm environment. When Scheckter first started out, he planted 13 km of hedgerows, along with 130,000 native trees. He introduced 31 different herbs and old grasses into his farm which, he says, creates a “mixed salad” for the animals.

He believes that the blend of biodynamic and organic is powerful because organics tells you what you can’t do and biodynamics tells you what you can and should do. That’s if you want to produce products that really can heal people and the planet, he says.

Scheckter agrees that biodynamic farming is “more than farming”. It is a way of life that “awakens you and your senses”. He subscribes to the view that a farm is “a living organism — self-contained, self-sustaining, following the cycles of nature, and able to create its own health and vitality out of the living dynamics of the farm”.

While he has a somewhat jaundiced view of the organic movement, Scheckter believes it has changed the world for the better – at least in its infancy. When he started out in farming, organic was “artisinal and purist in nature”. Since then it has become more popular, commercial and ultimately, “less pure”.

He sees biodynamics as still very much in its infancy with huge scope for growth. And in answer to whether it is possible in future for organic, biodynamic and conventional agriculture ever to get along, Scheckter pauses before answering. “Everyone has their own interests,” he says. “Get organic farming right and it can undo the damage that conventional farming does to the soil. Organic farming can make the soil better and can produce yields as good or even better as with conventional methods.”

He sees biodynamic farming as a step above, the aspirational “cherry” on the top of clean, healthy, ethical agricultural practices and produce.
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The outcome of the "Nutrition Trial of the 21st Century", as the public dubbed the case against UCT emeritus professor Tim Noakes, has done more than keep his integrity and scientific legacy and career intact.

Last month's comprehensive not-guilty verdict for Noakes has major implications for the food-bev industry in South Africa. It has become seminal in ways the Health Professions Council of SA (HPCSA), dietitian Claire Julsing Strydom and the Association for Dietetics in SA (ADSA) never intended – or imagined in their worst nightmares.

The verdict has undermined South Africa's conventional dietary guidelines that closely follow the USA guidelines on which low-fat, high-carb food-bev sectors depend. It also effectively put on trial the SAD (Standard American Diet) that South Africa closely follows – and found it deficient.

The trial has effectively put the brakes on the low-fat, high-carb food-bev industry in SA. It has also put a rocket under the burgeoning low-carb, high-fat (LCHF) industry.

It helps that LCHF aligns closely with the global food trend of health and wellness.

If Strydom and the HPCSA hoped to shoot Noakes as the messenger for LCHF, they achieved the exact opposite. Noakes is acknowledged as the father of "Banting", as the LCHF food movement is known in SA. The trial has made him a poster child for LCHF globally.

Strydom was president of ADSA when she started the HPCSA's case against Noakes by reporting him for a single tweet in February 2014. He tweeted that good first foods for infants are LCHF. The HPCSA charged him with unprofessional conduct and tried to present the case as just another hearing against a health professional. But their real aim soon became apparent: to discredit the evidence base for LCHF foods – and Noakes along the way.

The HPCSA was able to muster only a motley group of low-level ADSA-connected academics to bolster its case against LCHF. That backfired spectacularly when its own expert witnesses appeared woefully ignorant about the significant evidence that existed for LCHF when Noakes first tweeted. Nor did they appear aware of much of the robust evidence that Noakes presented during close to 40 hours of testimony in his own defence in 2016.

The "experts" also conceded that LCHF aligns closely with SA's paediatric and adult guidelines. Thus, the argument of LCHF as "dangerous" advice swiftly melted when seen through a scientific prism.

The HPCSA's independent Professional Conduct Committee, chaired by Pretoria advocate Joan Adams (now SC), found Noakes not-guilty on all 10 aspects of the charge of unprofessional conduct in a four-to-one ruling in April 2017.

The HPCSA appealed the verdict and held a hearing in February 2018. The prosecution team regurgitated claims about LCHF being "unconventional", "dangerous" and lacking science.

In June, its appeal committee ruled unanimously to uphold the not guilty ruling in full. The HPCSA has, therefore, spent more than four years and many millions of rand on a team of expensive external lawyers trying - and failing - to silence Noakes on LCHF science.

In his closing argument, Noakes' advocate, Michael van der Nest (SC), called the HPCSA's case against Noakes "an unprecedented prosecution and persecution of a world-famous scientist simply for his opinion on nutrition".

He said Strydom was "disgruntled" and that ADSA dietitians used Noakes' tweet as a pretext to persuade the HPCSA to launch a full-scale prosecution of him. They did so, he said, because the public was listening more to Noakes than to them and this was affecting their livelihoods.

More evidence of a conspiracy since the April 2017 verdict has surfaced to support that view. It includes an email chain in which Strydom and another ADSA dietitian, Maryke Gallagher, for help in silencing Noakes. Crucially, Strydom and Gallagher, a Woolworths consultant, communicated with Wentzel-Viljoen even before his February 2014 tweet.

In one email, Wentzel-Viljoen helpfully says the HPCSA "has a plan" for Noakes That added to evidence on the record at the hearing showing that Strydom, ADSA and the HPCSA were desperate to silence Noakes and discredit LCHF from the outset.

* Marika Sboros and Prof Tim Noakes are co-authors of Lore of Nutrition, Challenging Conventional Dietary beliefs (Penguin November 2017).

www.foodmet.net
In every crisis situation it is important that lessons are learned; when it is a matter of life or death it is critical. So it is commendable that the Government has, following the listeria outbreak, taken steps such as strengthening the National Health Laboratory Service's food testing capacity; and making a concerted effort to keep the public, especially vulnerable groups, informed with accurate health information about the disease and its prevention.

According to a Government statement, several steps have been taken to prevent the export of any contaminated meats to South Africa's trading partners abroad. This includes the rescinding by the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) of the export certification of any products implicated in the outbreak. However, the statement fails to address one critical question ... is the inspection regime for meat imports entering South African ports, much of it from countries with questionable health standards, equally stringent and thorough, to protect our own citizens with equal vigour?

Now, more than ever before, South African consumers must be concerned about the countries from which it imports meat, and we need to know, without any ambiguity, how effective our health control measures and inspection procedures actually are.

Last month, the EU suspended meat imports, mainly poultry, from 20 Brazilian establishments due to what the EU called “deficiencies detected in the Brazilian control systems”. In the interests of public health, South Africa should be doing the same.

There are only a few local facilities that produce the mechanically-deboned meat (MDM) used to make processed meats, including polony. Many brands of processed meat produced here contain “white slime”, as MDM is sometimes called, which is imported in massive quantities from Brazil.

To say that there are problems with Brazil’s meat-inspection regime is an understatement. At various times during the past year, dozens of countries banned meat imports from Brazil because of food-safety concerns.

Brazil’s meat-inspection scandal made global headlines when it was revealed that major meat producers and exporters were bribing inspectors. The fact that the CEO of one of Brazil’s largest meat producers was arrested and might face jail time, speaks volumes and should be cause for concern.

It was a full year after the listeriosis outbreak that South Africa finally imposed extra test requirements on imported meat products, but these intensified inspections by the Department of Health were only conducted for a brief period until the Department named Tiger’s polony factory in Polokwane as the source of the outbreak. Whether that

In the aftermath of the deadly listeria outbreak, Francois Baird asks some tough questions about the inspection of imported chicken “slime”.

Let’s stop playing chicken with our people’s health
Brazil has no requirement in its health and food safety regimes to report listeria. Listeriosis is not a notifiable disease there, as it is in most developed countries, but Brazil has a long and well-documented history of unacceptable levels of listeria being present in its processed meat, including meat for export.

“didn’t inform if they had established a standard microbiological acceptability of the product or the presence or number of bacterial masses per unit area or batch. There was no information about where the products came from ... or if they would be exported.”

In other words, South Africa imports the bulk of its MDM for processed meats from a country whose meat-inspection system is suspect and where there is no requirement to report listeria.

Brazil is now the major supplier of imported chicken to South Africa. If consumers are to be protected, we must have adequate screening of Brazilian chicken imports, including the 200 000 tons of MDM imported every year, most of it from Brazil.

This is a scandal that cannot be ignored. To date over 200 South Africans have paid with their lives for this food-safety scandal. And while the current outbreak of listeriosis has slowed down, this issue has to be addressed to prevent any recurrence.

The Brazilian producers must be inspected for health and safety compliance before being allowed to export meat products, including chicken, to South Africa. It is imperative that every consignment imported into this country must be inspected by health authorities, and the costs carried by the importers, not the taxpayer.

What this also highlights is that there is an enormous opportunity to establish more meat-deboning facilities on home turf so that South Africa increases chicken production and creates jobs as well as protecting its food security and the lives of consumers.

Extreme vigilance is needed. South African consumer safety must come first!

• Baird is the founder of FairPlay.

www.fairplaymovement.org
LABELLING

BY MIRIAM KAHN

Under growing consumer pressure, labelling of genetically-modified (GM) foods is coming under increased scrutiny. In response, American food regulators have now released a new labelling standard to address demands for better transparency and to accommodate possible future generations of genetically-enhanced foods.

Although some countries, including SA, long ago introduced GM labelling, this is the first time the US has taken action at a federal level. Starting in 2020, American food makers will be required to disclose products containing GM ingredients, but the controversial “genetically modified” label has been ditched in favour of “bioengineered”.

It gives food makers three options for disclosing the ingredients: a one-sentence label declaration, such as “contains a bioengineered food ingredient”; a standardized icon, such as the one used in the National Organic Program; or a QR code or other digital marker that directs shoppers to a website for more information.

The new rule will now undergo a public comment period and it could be finalized later this year.

The industry has welcomed the proposed rule as a major milestone in the complicated, years-long process to regulate the labelling of genetically modified foods. In a statement, the US Grocery Manufacturers’ Association praised the flexible standard, pointing out that it has already put QR codes on 25 000 products through its SmartLabel program.

Yet whatever the name, GM food remains a contentious issue worldwide because of ongoing health safety concerns over products that have been called “Frankenfoods”. And local experts believe that SA has much to learn from the new US moves.

While South Africa may appear to be ahead of many countries in the GM labelling game, the reality is we have two competing/conflicting regulations - one from the Department of the Health (DOH) and another from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

In 2004, the DOH introduced its GM labelling regulations under Regulation 25 of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act (FCDA, 1972).

Regulation 25 requires labelling of “foodstuffs produced through genetic modification – where they differ significantly from existing foodstuffs in terms of their composition, nutritional value, mode of storage, preparation or cooking, allergenicity or genes with human or animal origin”. That bit about differing significantly from existing foodstuffs is the reason why none of the current GM-foods on the market has been labelled under these regulations - these specific GM-foods are generally considered to be substantially equivalent to their conventional counterparts.

“Substantially equivalent” is a fairly contentious term in some circles, says Dr Jan-Hendrik “Hennie” Groenewald, Executive Manager of Biosafety SA, an initiative of the Department of Science and Technology. “But the fact remains it is supported by all the compositional, nutritional, functional data that are available for these foods,” Groenewald says.

That’s not really surprising, because only a couple of genes with defined activities are typically introduced into GM crops.

That being said, if someone, someday places a nutritionally-enhanced GM food on the market, it will have to be labelled under this regulation.

Enter the Consumer Protection Act (CPA, 2008) Regulation 293 from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Regulation 293 applies to “all processed and unprocessed goods that contain genetically modified ingredients or components”. So, GM goods should be labelled as such, irrespective of whether they are distinguishable from a conventional counterpart or not.

GM foods get a new name in USA: Can SA clean up its act too?
Groenewald says that makes GM or GMO in itself a “discriminatory” characteristic, irrespective of the substantive characteristics of the product. In other words, a subjective value judgement is made.

Groenewald and Biosafety Project Manager Dr Liezel Gouws have produced a report to explain the background and implications to the current GM labelling regulatory environment.

“The difference between the two sets of regulations is that Regulation 25 is based on health and food safety concerns, while Regulation 293 is purely value-based, hinging on the consumer’s intrinsic right to information,” they say.

There's nothing new about a value-system-based labelling of food products, they say, citing religion-based labels such as “Halaal” and “Kosher” or ethics-based labels such as “free range” or “organic”. These are all voluntary labels that relevant interest groups manage and maintain to give their particular constituencies a choice at their own cost. They are not mandatory legislative regulations affecting all consumers.

According to the CPA regulations, food producers, importers and packagers currently have to choose one of three mandatory labels for GM foods:

- "contains GMOs" where the GM content is at least 5%;
- "produced using genetic modification" for food produced directly from GMO sources; or
- "may contain GMOs" when argued that it is scientifically impractical and not feasible to test food for GM content. Voluntary labels include:
  - "does not contain GMOs" where the GM content is less than 1%  
  - "GM content is less than 5%" where GM content is between 1% and 5%; and
  - "may contain genetically modified ingredients" if it can't be detected.

It is important to realise, Gouws and Groenewald say, that these regulations require the labelling of individual ingredients in the ingredients table and not on a large label for the whole product, as consumers are used to with the current, more obvious “non-GM” marketing labels.

CPA regulations define GM labelling based on the premise of a consumer's intrinsic right to information. Groenewald and Gouws say that it raises the question why labelling is such a controversial issue. In short, they say that’s because it “asserts the obligation to distinguish between products, based on an esoteric value decision alone”.

Thus, although that does not dispute the consumer's right to information, it leaves the value of that knowledge open to abuse.

That raises another question: Why not just slap on a GM label and get it over with? They say that cost and unfair discrimination are the two main reasons. The regulations currently would obligate the introduction of separate value chains and the testing of all possible GM-containing products, they write.

This would have "considerable cost implications for the products on the market and the great majority of consumers who use them".

For example, 87% of South Africa's locally-produced maize is currently GM. The direct cost increase to the consumer depends on many factors, but the average is calculated to be between 9% and 12%. This implies that "the majority of the market will bear the costs of maintaining a value-system-based choice of a minority".

In addition, food makers fear that these labels will be used to promote unfair discrimination under the guise of "consumer choice". It could therefore be argued that interest groups exploit GM food labelling in support of a particular agenda because it is an easy and very public target.

“GM technology and, in particular, GM-derived foods have long been the target of destructive campaigns organised by NGOs and individuals with self-declared ‘environmental’ and/or ‘social’ agendas,” Groenewald and Gouws write.

In an interview, Groenewald says that the GM labelling regulations in South Africa are “working fairly well as an access to information tool”. That’s despite initial implementation uncertainties and even though several technical and practical flaws remain.

DTI is busy amending the regulation, he says, but so far, early revision drafts do not appear to incorporate any substantive changes.

It is important to remember, Groenewald says, that “general” GM food labelling is “a political rather than a substantive animal".

And while he has strong science-based concerns about GM labelling, "the political horse has bolted". For that reason, he supports a simple “may contain GMO ingredients” (or similar)
The South African consumer landscape is set for a multitude of shifts over the next ten years, driven by trends such as increasing urbanisation and the growing demand for convenience.

This was just one of several insights that emerged at Nielsen's recent Consumer 360 Event, which looked at the question of whether retailers and manufacturers are equipped to tackle SA's changing demographic trends.

Speaking at the event, Nielsen East and South Africa MD Bryan Sun focused on the key drivers that will shape consumer opportunities until 2025, which included the fact that the total South African population will increase by 6% - another 3-million people - during this period. This will be compounded by significant changes in labour force composition, with more than 4.3 million women entering the workforce by 2025.

Another key driver is the fact that 69% of South Africa's population will be urbanised by 2025, compared to the current 60%, resulting in cities and urban areas becoming increasingly crowded and with some cities failing to deliver vital infrastructure to support the influx of people.

“In a more urbanised world, space and time will be at a premium. Living areas will be smaller and storage areas and cupboard space/ storage will become more limited, with consumers requiring ease and efficient offerings to blend with their ‘on-the-go’ lifestyles. These types of dynamics create challenges that need to be solved and, currently, demand for improved solutions is greater than supply as consumers’ aspirations emerge,” said Sun.

EXPLODING BASKETS

Nielsen Innovation Director Esti Prinsloo reported that the allocation of consumer spend in the South African market has remained relatively static over the last 15 years, with absolute spend having grown ahead of inflation to the point where the total consumer goods basket is currently valued at R350-billion per annum.

Looking at the global picture, Prinsloo said brand growth is becoming much harder to find, which is borne out by the sombre 0% growth amongst the global Top 20 manufacturers while the Top 200 manufacturers have only achieved 2.4% growth in the last 12-months. There are also more categories, brands and products than ever before but the big question is whether they’re actually fulfilling consumer needs.

Prinsloo said the average supermarket had 1 400 more product lines than they did five years ago, but the number of brands per basket was dropping. The number of store trips has also come down from an average of 71 to 60 a year, she reported.

“There are many factors influencing these consumption trends, but to remain truly relevant requires brands to find a winning combination of being convenient and making consumers’ lifestyles easier, while also promoting healthy living via natural ingredients.”

RETAIL REVOLUTION

During his presentation, Nielsen Retail Vertical Lead Gareth Paterson reported that South Africa has added 100 000 new traditional (e.g. spaza) and modern (hypermarkets, supermarkets) stores to its retail universe over the past 20 years. “The landscape is shifting, not only between modern and traditional channels but also from big to small, offline to online and between specialist channels such as convenience, specialist, pop-up and niche outlets.

He said the South African traditional trade environment remains all about true convenience. “Today, traditional trade formats are highly flexible, adaptable,
agile store types, attracting more commuters due to their close proximity to travel hubs, allowing for ‘on-the-go’ shopping.

“What this means is that gone are the days when you could manage your distribution into all, or at least most, of the modern trade outlets or when traditional trade was limited to rural areas and its products were for lower income consumers or only consisted of confectionary and beverages.”

Looking at the modern trade format, namely hypermarkets and supermarkets, Paterson described it as a highly competitive space. That said, these types of stores have the advantage of larger floor areas and the resultant ability to capitalise and enhance those spaces. This is in line with the Nielsen's Global Retail Growth Strategies Survey findings that consumers are looking for proximity and speed, with 71% looking for convenient locations to shop and 61% preferring to get “in and out” quickly.

“In addition, they’re seeking ease and efficiency when shopping, with 60% wanting an organised store layout and 53% opting for stores with fast checkouts and short queues. Unsurprisingly then, 76% are willing to use a handheld device when checking out and 78% willing to engage in a self-service checkout,” added Paterson.

**E-COMMERCE**

Last but certainly not least, Paterson reported that e-commerce is outpacing all other retail channel growth, albeit off a lower base. “Given that consumers are now all about convenience, connection, and control, this format is perfectly aligned with a new generation of shoppers who are more informed and demanding.”

He stressed, however, that it was still essential for retailers to follow an inter-connected “clicks and bricks” strategy as South African consumers are not going to shift to online overnight. “The lines are blurring between manufacturer and retailer with the growth of direct to consumer.”

This integration is also taking place between physical and digital, with technology penetrating the shopping experience, media and commerce, with channels for shopping and entertainment merging.

“There are thus many more variables at play in today’s retail landscape and many more opportunities to win or lose with consumers who are swiftly adopting new shopping behaviors and demanding better, faster, more personalised retail and product experiences.”

www.nielsen.com
When it comes to scientific research on sugar alternatives, it’s usually a sweet-and-sour, roller-coaster journey. Aspartame is no exception, as makers of products containing this non-nutritive sweetener have found. Since its inception, aspartame has faced research highs followed by precipitative lows. That’s on the back of increasing evidence that excess sugar intake, rather than fat, lies at the heart of many serious health issues that are epidemic worldwide. Chief among these are obesity and type two diabetes – or “diabesity”, as doctors now refer to the twin epidemics.

Research in this area is of particular relevance for South Africa that is facing skyrocketing diabesity rates in both children and adults.

The latest low for aspartame comes in the form of research presented at the recent annual Experimental Biology conference in San Diego. Once again, the research builds on and confirms other evidence that artificial sweeteners raise the risk of obesity and diabetes. It singles out aspartame.

The study by USA researchers at the Medical College of Wisconsin and Marquette University effectively suggests that aspartame “tricks the body into storing fat”. And in this way, contributes to an increased risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

The researchers tested their hypothesis on rats and cell cultures. They also used technology known as high-throughput metabolomics that allows researchers to investigate how something affects cellular metabolism.

Their research shows that artificial sweeteners alter how the body processes fat and produces energy at the cellular level. While operating on completely different chemical pathways, artificial sweeteners can produce the same kinds of health consequences as sugar - only faster.

Of course, the caveat remains that mice are not men and, as with all rodent studies, the data may not be generalisable to humans. Still, when the study design is strong and the data robust, as appears to be the case here, the experts say that such research offers useful insight into both sugar and sweeteners that scientists can take forward with further research.

The Wisconsin researchers have looked at vascular functioning and how different sweeteners affect the way the body uses and stores food. Although the pathways are different, they found that both sugar and artificial sweeteners result in impairments.

Study lead author is Dr Brian Hoffmann, assistant professor in the department of biomedical engineering at the Marquette University and Medical College of Wisconsin. In his comments on the research, Hoffman says that the body, in moderation, has the machinery to handle sugar. It is only when you overload the system over a long period that this leads to machinery breakdown.

Artificial sweeteners, on the other hand, wear the machinery down faster. Sweeteners “kind of trick the body”, Hoffman says. That forces the body to look for alternative energy sources because it needs some sugar to function properly.

One of those alternative sources is muscle, and the study data showed evidence of protein breakdown in the rodents’ blood. The rats were burning muscle as a source of energy when given artificial sweeteners.

Hoffman notes that this research
While operating on completely different chemical pathways, artificial sweeteners can produce the same kinds of health consequences as sugar - only faster.

differs markedly from previous attempts to link artificial sweeteners to serious health issues. One reason, he says, is because most sweeteners were approved long before the technology was available to do the research that he is now able to do at his laboratory.

Until now, researchers have been unable to look in-depth at some of the potential effects that artificial sweeteners have on body biochemistry. By knowing what biochemical changes are occurring, Hoffman says his team can take "an unbiased approach and see what's changing to give us a better direction".

His conclusion is that excessive intake of artificial sweeteners such as aspartame is likely to cause problems because of the chain of biochemical changes they set off and from which the body has no time to recover.

It bears repeating that it isn't only obesity and diabetes that research has associated with aspartame use. Cancer is another.

In South Africa, the latest position statement by the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) sits very much on the fence. CANSA agrees that the association between artificial sweeteners and cancer in humans is "a difficult topic to research as there is such a wide range of both sweetening agents and cancers". It rightly advises caution when attempting to extrapolate animal data to humans.

At this time, due to "inconclusive evidence available and limited human studies", CANSA says that it "continues to follow the research done on non-nutritive sweeteners, overall health during the lifecycle and the possible link to cancer risk in humans".

In 2013, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) conducted a comprehensive review of all the evidence. EFSA concluded that aspartame was "safe for human consumption, including pregnant women and children".

In the end then, which comes out worse, sugar or artificial sweeteners? Hoffman and his team have cautioned that their results do not provide a clear answer and the question warrants further study.

They have emphasised that it is well-known that research associates high dietary sugar with negative health outcomes and their study suggests artificial sweeteners do so as well.

Hoffman says it’s not as simple as suggesting that if people just stop using artificial sweeteners, overall health outcomes related to diabetes and obesity will resolve positively. "If you chronically consume these foreign substances (just as you would do with sugar) the risk of negative health outcomes increases. As with other dietary components, I like to tell people moderation is the key."
As we prepare for the Department of Health to extend the scope of our HACCP Regulation R908 of the Foodstuff, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act to include processed meat, it is important to note that Codex HACCP is undergoing a major revision, the last having occurred in 2003.

At a Codex Committee of Food Hygiene meeting in Lima, Peru in November 2014, Finland, with input from New Zealand and the United States, submitted a discussion paper and project document on the need to revise the General Principles of Food Hygiene (GPFH) and its Annex: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application (the HACCP Annex) to better clarify the relationship between the General Principles of Food Hygiene and HACCP and provide additional HACCP guidance helpful to food business operators.

The committee established an electronic working group (EWG) led by France and Thailand to review the GPFH and identify any need for updating (e.g. clarification on the use of potable water vs. clean water); review its Annex on HACCP and recommend updates, as necessary; and consider the appropriateness and possibility of combining the GPFH and its HACCP Annex into one document.

Delegates agreed that the GPFH and its HACCP annex are very important documents and there is a need to revise the current GPFH and its HACCP annex. The committee agreed that there was a need to keep the text of any revision as simple as possible to allow for flexibility in accommodating the different sizes and nature of food businesses.

The working group discussed the role of Good Hygiene Practices (GHPs) as an independent food hygiene system as well as a prerequisite to the implementation of HACCP.

There was a general agreement as to the existence of two types of control measures - control measures applied at Critical Control Points (CCPs) and those that are challenging with respect to monitoring and not applied at CCPs.

However, the second type of control measure is addressed differently by countries. For instance, some consider them as “enhanced GHPs” while other address them as “OPRPs” (as defined in ISO 22000).

The working group agreed that a comparison table of GHP, CCP and other type(s) of control measures and examples could provide a better understanding of the issue. The working group was also to consider whether aspects on commitment and responsibility on food safety, including food safety culture, should be incorporated.

In the last draft circulated, a comparison table and decision tree have been included to help clarify the relationship among different types of controls.

The references to management commitment and food safety culture have been strengthened and given more prominence, and references to allergen controls have been included.

However, a number of issues need to be resolved before moving forward, including (1) whether all food businesses should conduct a hazard analysis (the concept of a “basic hazard analysis” is introduced), (2) whether the concept of control measures at places other than CCPs (provisionally named enhanced GHPs) should be introduced, and (3) whether controls for primary production should be addressed by a specific section in the document or spread throughout the document to better demonstrate how the guidance applies at all stages of the food chain.

There is also a need to consider the format and structure of the document to reach agreement on the extent to which this should be revised and aligned with other documents such as ISO 22000.

As of October 2017, there are still some debates ongoing on the issue so watch this space. Perhaps we will see some feedback from the Department of Health (our Codex contact point) in this regard.
ISO22000 hot off the Press!

BY LINDA JACKSON

The new ISO 22000:2018 standard is out. According to ISO, the revision consolidates the most recent issues surrounding food safety to suit the current landscape of the food sector.

A total of 1 800 comments from a variety of global stakeholders representing a broad range of positions were taken into consideration. The objective is to translate the revised concepts included in the standard and communicate them to users in a clear and concise manner that makes ISO 22000 easier to understand and implement for organisations of all sizes, in every aspect of the food chain. I guess we will be the judge of that.

If you haven’t already purchased your copy (I would wait for the SANS cover to save some money), what are you waiting for?

The new version has adopted ISO’s new High-Level Structure (HLS), which is the common framework for all management systems standards. The structure makes it easier for businesses to integrate more than one management system into their processes at a given time. This means we will go from 8 to 10 sections in the standard and the adoption of some common terminology.

The revised standard provides a new understanding of the notion of “risk”. Risk is a vital concept for food businesses and the standard will distinguish between risk at the operational level (through HACCP) and risk at the strategic level of the management system (business risk) with its ability to embrace opportunities in order to reach a business’s specific goals.

There are a lot of new terms and definitions such as action criterion for the monitoring of an operational prerequisite program, stakeholders and significant food safety hazards, among others. Hopefully, you will now understand monitoring, operational prerequisite programmes, OPRP and critical control points better too.

The scope of the standard now requires us to consider under Clause 4. CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION, the internal and external issues relevant for the strategic direction of the business and the ability to get the intended results.

In this section, it is also now required to identify the needs and expectations of stakeholders. Food safety is now considered a strategic issue not just an operational one.

In line with this, Clause 5. LEADERSHIP is a new heading, and the role of top management is now better defined.

Clause 6. PLANNING requires that actions to address risk and opportunities must be defined. We will need to manage the risks at the operational level (through HACCP – see Clause 8), as well as the strategic level of the management system, and also evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken and their impact on clients and other interested parties.

There are now two separate Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycles that work together; one applies to the overall food safety management system and the other involves the operations specified in Clause 8 that simultaneously covers the HACCP principles.

Clause 7. SUPPORT now clearly describes the steps to follow when a business uses externally-developed elements in their food safety management system.

One interesting change is the removal of the term “documented procedures” and its replacement with “documented information”. This does not mean you should throw away your procedures as the intention is to provide for other forms of information such as digital controls. Documented information must still be controlled. We should keep what we need rather than assume the standard is allowing us to ditch our manuals.

Clause 8. OPERATION contains the fundamentals of setting up the HACCP plan which has not changed. For both traceability system and emergency preparedness and response, further details regarding what needs to be considered are now mentioned.

Processing aids, packaging and utilities are also to be added to the required documented flow diagrams.

Within the characteristics of raw materials, ingredients and packaging, the source of each product needs now also to be defined and documented.

When selecting and/or establishing PRPs, the applicable technical specification in the ISO/TS 22002 series must be considered.

Validation of control measures must now be documented and conducted before implementation of a HACCP plan.

The HACCP and OPRP plan are put together in a Hazard Control Plan with action criteria to be defined for the identified OPRPs and critical limits (as usual) for CCPs.

The reshuffling of requirements means management review has moved to the end in Clause 9. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION, which is more logical in my opinion. There are more aspects to be discussed during management review meetings, such as performance of external providers (suppliers), review of risks and opportunities, and effectiveness of actions taken to address them, opportunities for continual improvement, the adequacy of resources, etc.

Bringing up the end is Clause 10. IMPROVEMENT, where there are no critical changes, but steps to follow when non-conformity occurs are now clearly detailed.

As was the case with the initial publication of ISO 22000, private certification schemes in the food industry (such as BRC Global Standards, FSSC 22000 and other programmes recognised by the Global Food Safety Initiative) are likely to consider the revised standard requirements in the light of their own schemes.

Subsequent amendments to these programmes may well take place in due course. There will be a transition period for implementation as with all new standards and you should consult your certification body in this regard.

There is going to be the inevitable shake up that comes with a new standard and increased costs for training. If this work results in further protection from food safety hazards for the public, it will have achieved its objective.
As the food industry works to regain consumer trust and prevent future foodborne illness outbreaks, a cloud-based food safety and supply chain quality compliance system is now available in South Africa. TraQtion, a wholly owned subsidiary of NSF International, uses a cloud-based platform to comprehensively manage all aspects of food industry supply chains – including products, suppliers and site compliance.

While TraQtion is new to South Africa, the cloud-based software’s quality and compliance tools are already used by thousands of food industry professionals in 90 countries. “In the light of current events, there is no doubt that the food industry – one that touches the life of every South African citizen – has been dealt a massive public health and reputational blow,” said Ulli Gerntholtz, NSF International Africa’s Consulting & Technical Services Manager. “I believe TraQtion will become an essential tool as we work to regain control of the food industry’s processes, rebuild consumer confidence, protect public health and quell the confusion facing South Africans today.”

TraQtion was designed by food safety and technology experts at NSF International, a global organisation with more than 70 years of public health expertise. TraQtion’s capabilities include:

- **Advanced Specification Management** – Helps bring speed to market in new product development and ensures central, validated ingredient specifications and finished product information. The module can be used stand alone or combined with the full suite of TraQtion services to scan, evaluate and interpret data across the supply chain.
- **Supplier Compliance** – Provides control and visibility into supply chain food safety information and supplier communications. Its proprietary compliance engine runs around the clock, checking against requirements and generating automatic alerts for appropriate actions. This solution can help companies acquire better document management to meet numerous governmental standards.
- **Product Compliance** – TraQtion provides assurance that products received meet specifications and enables more informed product orders. All product information is in one place allowing for full compliance that can permit immediate pull of products and identification of alternate suppliers in a time of need.
- **Site Compliance** – TraQtion provides necessary tools at the site level while enabling centralised compliance tracking. The central dashboard for all facilities provides at-a-glance performance ratings identified by the TraQtion compliance engine to support quick actions and streamlined communications.

“Right now, I challenge every leader in the food industry – from CEOs to quality assurance and operational directors – to talk with us about TraQtion, a solution that is specifically designed to simplify complexity and restore peace of mind,” said Gerntholtz. “TraQtion can help ensure compliance – from raw ingredients to end-user consumer packaging – simply and effectively. This solution can help companies restore trust in the industry once more.”

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ABB's broad digital portfolio enables increased control and visibility to better optimize productivity with less energy and water, realize improved food safety and traceability, and minimize waste. ABB can help you build the flexible, cost-effective production systems needed to manage your risks and gain the most from today’s trends. new.abb.com/food-beverage
Our 2018 Supplier Directory is packed with info on South Africa’s leading foodbev industry suppliers.

This year’s 40-page edition has more categories, more companies. It’s got whatever you’re looking for, from ingredients & flavours to packaging and processing equipment, consumables and key industry services.

If you missed the print edition, the Directory is always available online (a PDF file you can quickly download) at: www.fbreporter.co.za

Get it at www.fbreporter.co.za
Why Metal Ticks All the Right Boxes

Excellent recovery rate will drive up market share, predicts Singh

The metal packaging industry is poised for growth and is on the cusp of an exciting era as efforts to introduce new technology and improve this packaging material’s environmental credentials are starting to bear fruit.

This was the message Kishan Singh, Chief Executive Officer of MetPac-SA, delivered at the Australian Institute of Packaging’s (AIP) biennial national conference held recently in Queensland, Australia.

Singh was one of the 40 leading international and national experts who were invited to represent the global food, beverage, manufacturing and packaging industries. He used the opportunity to introduce the international audience to the mission and vision of MetPac-SA, the Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) representing the steel, tinplate and aluminium packaging industries in South Africa.

Presenting his paper on global packaging trends, Singh predicted an unprecedented demand for metal and aluminium cans in the years to come. “As the global population continues to grow, so too will the demand increase for packaging that is convenient, prevents food wastage, eases supply chain stresses, but is also recyclable and sustainable. Metal packaging ticks all these boxes,” he said.

Metal packaging equates for 9.2% of South Africa’s packaging market value, which totals approximately R65 billion, and 7% of the approximately 3.3 million tons of market volume (ex-converter) in 2016. Whilst seemingly small compared to some of the other packaging streams, Singh predicts that metal packaging is poised to grow its market share owing to its excellent recovery rate.

“Metal packaging is infinitely recyclable because of its metallurgical chemistry, composed of Iron (Fe) or Aluminium (Al) atoms. When used steel or aluminium cans are recycled, these atoms are reconstituted into their original atomic arrangements, completely renewing the material for use again. “It is this criterion, amongst many others, that will continue to hold metal as an extremely viable packaging material into the future.”

Singh told delegates that South Africa has one of the highest recovery rates for used metal packaging in the world. “We currently sit at around 73%, up from 70% in 2015, with plans to steadily increase our targets in excess of 75% by 2021,” Singh revealed.

In an attempt to improve its green credentials, the industry has also made significant progress in recent years to reduce its environmental footprint by light-weighting its products. This has resulted in metal packaging becoming significantly more competitive and attractive for product designers.

Despite these breakthroughs, Singh said there are still some challenges being faced by the metal packaging industry in its quest to increase recovery and recycling rates. These include:

• Slow economic growth
• Lack of separating recyclable materials at source / low collection and recycling awareness
• Limited access to landfills by waste pickers, resulting in them not getting access to materials
• Long distances between consumption and recycling infrastructure

“As an industry we are aware of these challenges, but are working on finding workable solutions that will address these issues and improve the recyclability and recovery of metal packaging for years to come. “To this end, our Industry Waste Management Plan is currently being
World Environment Day came and went on June 5 with a global focus on the need to urgently reduce plastic pollution - and Woolworths chose the day to announce that by 2022 all of its own-brand plastic packaging will be reusable and recyclable.

Woolies is the first retailer in South Africa to declare this commitment to zero packaging waste to landfill. The retailer aims to have none of its packaging end up in landfills, which requires 100% recyclable material and a supportive recycling infrastructure.

To meet its goal, the company says it is working towards removing all packaging that is currently not recyclable, focussing on removing unnecessary single-use plastics from stores (such as plastic straws and shopping bags) and ensuring ongoing customer education on the role of packaging in the elimination of food waste. It will phase out single-use plastic shopping bags completely by 2020.

Woolworths SA CEO Zyda Rylands says the move follows extensive customer research and engagement, both formally and through social media channels that shed light on both customer recycling habits and entrenched customer perceptions.

“We know that many of our customers fully support our zero packaging waste to landfill journey and they want to see it happen as fast as possible. But this is not a path that we can walk alone. To succeed, we need our customers, our suppliers and the South African recycling industry to work with us.”

Critical to the success of these ambitious goals is the company’s continued commitment to partner with government and industry (recyclers, packaging convertors, producer responsibility organisations) to develop technically and commercially viable solutions to recycling different plastics.

Several in-store trials are currently underway at selected Woolworths stores in order to engage customers on the new plastic reduction efforts. These include:

- Wooden cutlery and paper straws rolled out in WCafes with a view to phasing out plastic cutlery and straws completely;
- Plastic straws are no longer available for purchase in store;
- A pilot coffee cup recycling programme is currently underway in NowNow stores;
- Trialling reverse-recycling vending machines, where customers can bring in their recyclables and put them into the vending machine so that they can be recycled; and
- Trialling a new range of affordable, reusable shopping bags.

John Duncan, World Wildlife Fund SA’s Senior Manager: Marine Programme, has endorsed Woolworths’ ambitious goals.

“The immediate challenge is to limit the use of plastic to appropriate applications and improve its end-of-life management through reuse and recycling. In setting holistic and ambitious plastic packaging commitments, Woolworths is clearly taking a leadership role on this issue and is significantly raising the bar for others to follow in rethinking how and when we use plastics.”

Woolies may seem like it is blowing its own trumpet but the company has reached key milestones already in this plastic reduction and recycling journey:

- It has already successfully light-weighted and reduced its packaging by almost 700 tonnes to date.
- It was the first retailer in SA to launch on-pack recycling labelling that clearly communicates the recyclability of the packaging;
- It was the first retailer in SA to launch a plant-based plastic milk bottle in 2016;
- It was the first major SA retailer to use recycled PET (rPET) in juice bottles and to incorporate recycled PET bottles into its packaging.
- It uses up to 50% post-consumer recycled content in more than 600 product lines;
- It was the first major retailer in SA to remove all plastic micro-beads from own-brand beauty and bath products;
- It has successfully trialled recycling PET salad trays into fabric for the automobile industry.

Rylands has the last word: “Sustainability and our Good Business Journey are at the heart of everything that we do. That’s why these commitments are a natural next step on our journey to ensuring that we play our part in creating shared value within our communities and protecting our planet for future generations.”
HOT METAL

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drafted with the inputs from industry role players for submission later this year,” Singh said.

Looking at the future, the forecast is that metal packaging will continue to grow its market share through continued innovation. The beverage sector in particular holds exciting opportunities for the sector.

“Metal packaging will adapt and accommodate to the requirements of the modern consumer, through shape, size, functionality and closure changes, and, most importantly, by an unwavering industry quest for mass reduction without compromising packaging efficacy. “Metal is known to retain internal pressures of carbonated soft drinks far more efficiently than other materials. In addition, the closure designs on beverage cans are able to retain internal pressure at almost 100%, enabling longer shelf lives and extended supply chain distances and durations.

“Given these exciting developments, it is only a matter of time before the metal slice of the pie gradually increases as metal packs become the more preferred choice for supply chain efficiency,” said Singh.

Current members of MetPac-SA include raw material supplier Hulamin, converters Nampak, PackSolve, Tin Can Man, Coleus and brand owners SAB (Pty) Ltd, Distell, Heineken, Coca-Cola and Nestlé.

Concluded Singh: “Our vision is to bring together the entire metal packaging value chain in South Africa and to promote the interests and recycling of steel, tin plate and aluminium packaging. We do this by keeping a close eye on local and international legislation that could have an impact on our industry. For this reason, we are urging all raw material suppliers, primary packaging converters, fillers/bottlers, retailers as well as brand owners, to sign up as members so that we can have a greater impact and be able to hold our place in the packaging industry in the future”.

www.metpacsa.org.za

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As a normal constituent of air, nitrogen also has no global warming potential and so there are neither pollution nor emission problems associated with venting “used” nitrogen into the atmosphere. In the context of food chilling and freezing, therefore, nitrogen is an ideal clean gas.

Being non-corrosive also means that nitrogen can be used in pressurised systems manufactured from a wide range of cost-effective common materials; the only proviso being that the material can withstand the process pressures and temperature involved.

**Flash freezing**

Liquid nitrogen is at a temperature of -196 °C, so on contact with an item of food, it freezes it very rapidly. Compared to freezing food using mechanical chillers, cryogenic freezing using nitrogen is up to four times faster. This results in smaller ice crystallisation because the water inside and outside the cells of the food all freeze at the same rapid rate, keeping the cells intact and retaining the natural freshness, flavour and texture of the product.

This process is called flash freezing and it better preserves the nutrients, taste and texture of the frozen food, so that when defrosted for cooking, it is nearly indistinguishable from its fresh equivalent.

This technology represents a hi-tech departure from the traditional approaches of mechanically freezing food products on a conveyor belt or immersing them directly into a pool of liquid nitrogen.

Instead, with the flash-freezing process, food on a conveyor is completely surrounded by a stream of high-velocity, extremely cold nitrogen vapour. Food frozen in this way is called individually quick-frozen (IQF) and, through Linde and its state-of-the-art Cryoline® CW multi-purpose cryogenic freezing technology, Afrox can offer a variety of IQF poultry, meat and seafood solutions to African markets.

**Cleaner cold chain**

In Europe, cold food transportation is estimated to be responsible for nearly 2% of total emissions. Road transport refrigeration equipment, which usually runs off a diesel-powered truck engine, is generally much less energy efficient than the systems in supermarkets or cold storage warehouses.

As an alternative to relatively slow mechanical refrigeration, total loss systems using liquid nitrogen are now available.

Where staff might take some time to load or offload, it is important to have a system that can quickly establish and keep the cold chain temperatures required. The use of nitrogen avoids having to keep the truck engine running while loading and offloading produce. Instead of diesel exhaust fumes being released into the atmosphere, nitrogen gas is emitted, which is harmless to the environment and to the people loading the vehicle.

Linde's FROSTCRUISE® indirect cryogenic refrigeration system is purpose-designed for the food trucking industry of today, overcoming the environmental challenges associated with diesel consumption and eliminating potentially harmful refrigerants used in mechanical systems.

Advantages include rapid cooling with very stable temperature control; reduced carbon footprint through diesel savings; the elimination of hazardous refrigerants (e.g. R404A); low-noise design for easy deliveries at night time or to residential areas; longer service life compared with mechanical solutions; and cost efficiencies due to ease of service and maintenance.

Using nitrogen-based systems such as FROSTCRUISE® for food transportation enables the food industry to better monitor and control chilled and frozen food safety and quality. It raises the credibility of food and supermarket brands, while protecting the environment.

Hendrik.Pretorius@afrox.linde.com

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**Hendrik Pretorius, Afrox’s application specialist for food & beverage markets, looks at nitrogen and its use in chilling and freezing.**
The past few months have witnessed a surge in interest in the ecological impact of food and beverage packaging. Across global social media platforms there’s been widespread discussion on the effects of single-use packaging, with many brands, retailers and restaurants joining the campaign against plastic pollution and taking a fresh look at glass.

Speaking at The Glass Recycling Company’s (TGRC) 5th Annual Green Dialogues event in Johannesburg recently, CEO Shabeer Jhetam revealed that the glass recycling rate in South Africa has increased to 41.5% in South Africa.

As of July 1, The City of Jo’burg started to enforce mandatory recycling, and this is expected to further increase the amount of glass directed away from landfills.

According to Jhetam, SA has one of the most progressive and efficient returnable glass bottle systems in the world, making glass the sustainable packaging choice. Through the combination of increased recycling and SA’s efficient returnable system, the diversion of glass from landfill has been growing rapidly.

During the past year, TGRC trained and mentored 622 entrepreneurs. With an increased focus on the hospitality industry, over 120 newly onboarded businesses in the sector’s recycling programmes took place across the country over and above the 4 000 banks in major metropoles. TGRC has also created opportunities for more than 50 000 individuals to earn a source of income through recycling since its inception.

www.tgrc.co.za

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Just like any service or product being sold in today's highly competitive environment, training and skills development are increasingly becoming more personalised to suit the unique needs of customers. In step with this global development, Plastics|SA has for some time now been offering personalised learning programmes and training modules for customers who specifically request a modified version for their staff.

A recent example was the training offered to Pretoria-based Venture Diversified Products – a multi-faceted plastics manufacturing and design company that specialises in extrusion, vacuum forming, blow moulding and injection moulding.

“Venture asked us to customise a one-year learning programme for them, comprehensively covering all aspects of knowledge, practical skills and workplace experiential components of the injection moulding machine setter occupation,” says Kirtida Bhana, training executive at Plastics|SA.

Venture enrolled 13 learners, including unemployed graduates, in the programme which began in February.

Says Kirtida: “We believe in providing our learners with world class skills for their practical and theoretical training. For this reason, we devise very comprehensive training plans for our students, which includes partnering with other service providers who specialise in various offerings as the need arises. Owing to the fact that an understanding of pneumatics and hydraulics was vital to this group of learners, Plastics|SA called upon the assistance of Festo - a leading, global supplier of automation technology and the performance leader in industrial training and education programmes.”

Living up to its international reputation for service and product excellence, Festo provided a fully equipped “classroom on wheels”, which remained parked at Plastics|SA’s premises for the duration of the training course.

“The Festo Mobile Mechatronics Lab (MML) treated the students to a highly-engaging experience, allowing them to interact with technology used in today’s advanced manufacturing environment,” says Kirtida.

“Students and trainers thoroughly enjoyed getting out of the traditional training environment and into this high-tech mobile classroom. Not only did they derive the benefit of excellent theoretical grounding and lively group discussions, but they also got to experience first-hand the modern marvel of today’s advanced manufacturing facilities - clean environments filled with skilled professionals operating all kinds of mechanical, electronic, and computer-based systems.”

www.plasticsinfo.co.za/training
BIG SAVINGS ON CODING CONSUMABLES

Manufacturers are always looking at ways to cut costs, and there are considerable savings to be made on coding consumables, says Graeme Aitken, Managing Director of Specialised Printing Products (SPP).

SPP specialises in on-line coding consumables such as thermal transfer ribbon, hot stamping foil, thermal printing heads as well as hot foil coders.

“Don’t be fooled into remaining loyal to a particular ribbon brand because this limits your options and you end up paying a premium anyway,” says Aitken, adding: “Start saving immediately by making informed decisions based on comparative ribbon specifications and don’t be surprised to discover that ribbons like ours are practically identical in composition and performance. It might leave you wondering why you have been paying a premium for all these years.”

SPP says its consumables are suited to all leading thermal transfer overprinter brands like Videojet, Markem, Savema, Linx etc.

Graeme@spproducts.co.za Louiseb@spproducts.co.za

Goscor vacuums up a whole lot of sugar dust

Tongaat Hulett’s sugar refinery in Rosshburgh, Durban is looking spotless these days after the installation of a state-of-the-art of Delfin vacuum system.

The system was supplied and installed by Goscor Cleaning Equipment (GCE) in partnership with Maverick Industrial Cleaning Solutions.

The Rosshburgh plant refines and packs over 610 000 tons of sugar a year in various packaging forms, ranging from sachets to bulk sugar. The vacuum system was required for the pan house where the raw sugar is refined. Due to the fact that sugar dust is combustible, an ATEX standard explosion-proof solution was deemed necessary for this project. The system collects 750-800kg of dust per hour. This is achieved with four operators working simultaneously.

Goscor vacuums up a whole lot of sugar dust

Done and dusted ... from left: Wesley Bodmer (Goscor’s Durban Branch Manager), Duane Schwartz (Maverick Sales Director), Grant Cockburn (Corporate Security Manager for Tongaat Hulett), Anton Nieuwoudt (MD, Maverick Industrial Cleaning Solutions).

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For the last few years, packaging industry professionals have been curious about the future of smart packaging. Whilst barcodes and quick-response (QR) codes were once considered the “next big thing”, the acceleration in digital innovation is transforming packaging to keep up with changing consumer purchasing habits.

Smart packaging provides consumers with extra information, but also communicates with retailers and manufacturers, regulates temperature and oxygen/CO2 supply, protects against theft, and makes it possible to track a product’s journey during transit.

However, this is only the beginning: The Internet of Things (IoT) and Industry 4.0, otherwise known as the 4th Industrial Revolution, sees this digital transformation having so much more to offer the packaging sector.

This technology disruptor is changing the landscape of primary and secondary pack design and development, pushing marketing strategies towards the digital frontier, including budget allocations in advertising and communication, to talk to the digital, nomadic consumer of the future.

Gone are the days where packaging design is purely functional, used only to protect the contents of consumer packaged goods during shipment and storage. Brands are learning how powerful an effect packaging design can have on brand perception and sales.

While most purchase decisions are still being made in front of the shelf, traditional methods for measuring that moment of truth are no longer efficient. However, with the help of artificial intelligence, more and more companies are harnessing the power of shelf data.

The first mobile/digital un-staffed stores are now being trialed by the likes of Amazon in the US and Bingobox in China. Mobile commerce is the key to these innovations. Stratcom Branding CEO Gail Macleod says consumers on the African continent will become increasingly m-commerce capable. Lack of infrastructure will power the need to be connected to satisfy basic needs.

She says Africa is showing signs of accelerated progress towards the digital packaging revolution, driven by expanding markets for consumer products, rising incomes, the move to mobile, increasing numbers of younger consumers and growing domestic economies, particularly those in East and West Africa.

The key lies in transforming every Stock Keeping Unit (SKU) into actionable data that leads to consumer insight. Shelves are becoming a high science environment with smart technology enabling accurate stock taking; the next logical step is to enable the packaging to drive information and added benefits.

“The sheer volume of products sold per day by high volume brands means that the potential of one-on-one reach with tailored label content and language will drastically change the landscape of advertising and packaging. Smart packaging will be a logical step in the eventual digitisation of the retail market,” says Macleod.

“While brands don’t have to jump at every new smart technology that comes out of the pipeline, they do need to stay abreast with the opportunity to incorporate smart packaging design elements that make the most sense for their brand image and product lines.

“We need to be able to strike a balance between cost-effectiveness and functionality. Smart packaging is revolutionising the packaging industry and ensuring that packaging retains its role at the heart of the customer experience.”

www.stratcombranding.com
Radical Waters (Pty) Ltd, specialists in Electrochemically Activated Water (ECA) solutions, have launched a compact ECA generator for the food, beverage, small scale disinfection and hospitality markets.

The company says that due to demand for a smaller, fully automated and self-contained sized generator, it designed the N.O.W (Natural Oxidant Water) Generator to address the market gap.

The ECA solutions generated by the N.O.W Generator are dual stream - the generator produces both Anolyte (disinfectant) with a FAC of >300ppm, @pH 6.5 and Catholyte (detergent) with ~400ppm NaOH @pH >11.4. The solutions are typically diluted according to the application.

Why Use ECA?

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- Elimination of storage and handling of chemicals
- Elimination of transport, therefore reducing CO2 emission footprint
- Reduced labour liability

Typical ECA Applications:

1. Cleaning in Place & Cleaning out of Place
2. Surface Disinfection (food and surfaces)
3. Ingredient in sauce manufacture
4. Grain decontamination
5. Water treatment

The N.O.W Generators are manufactured in the USA and are EPA certified. They are available in 40, 60 and 80 litre per hour of concentrated solutions at a ratio of approximately 50%/50% of Anolyte vs Catholyte.

www.radicalwaters.com

Goscor & Maverick suck up all the sweet dust ...

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The project was led by Maverick Sales Director Duane Schwarz, who has more than 15 years’ experience in selling industrial cleaning equipment and is well-known in the KwaZulu-Natal industrial cleaning equipment sector.

Maverick MD Anton Nieuwoudt comments that the challenges associated with the project included working at extreme heights. “The fact that the area contains combustible dust required us to take special precautions when using power tools, welding machines, and the like. All areas had to be made safe before any work could commence. The refinery was in full production, which only added to the challenges we faced.”

Tongaat Hulett Corporate Security Manager and Refinery Health, Safety, Environment and Security Manager Grant Cockburn said the vacuum system was selected due to Delfin’s reputation and track record as a leading manufacturer of industrial vacuum cleaners.

He noted that the reliability and durability of the Delfin system, as well as its compliance with the specifications and performance requirements of this particular project along with the trusted product support and expertise provided by Goscor and Maverick, made it the best-suited option.

www.goscor.co.za
Ishida Europe has introduced 10 and 14 head multihead weighers especially designed to deliver fast and accurate weighing of fragile products such as biscuits, wafers and frozen items.

Easily-breakable products can pose a challenge for automated weighing systems. The design of the new Ishida CCW-RV 10 and 14 head GS weighers incorporates gentle slopes and reduced angles throughout the weigher to ease the passage of the products.

Bancollan inserts for the hoppers and discharge chute provide effective cushioning, while unique curved pool and weigh hopper designs deliver controlled deceleration, further minimising the potential for breakages.

In addition, a ring shutter helps prevent breakages due to product collisions in the discharge chute during transfer of product into the packaging machine.

For fragile frozen products such as pasta, seafood, fruits, vegetables and bakery items, the GS model can be specified in a WP waterproof version. The IP69K test rating means that the weigher offers the highest levels of water and dust resistance, making it perfectly suited to applications where equipment has to be thoroughly sanitised.

The CCW-RV 10 & 14 head GS offer all the proven benefits of the Ishida RV range with its reputation for unsurpassed accuracy and efficiency.

All heads are capable of being used in a single combination calculation, and the unique triple combination calculation software can calculate three optimal weight combinations, double checks them and then selects the one nearest to the target weight, all in a single cycle. This minimises error and increases efficiency, while also enhancing weighing accuracy and consistency.

Anti-floor vibration removes background vibration from the load cell output signal, improving signal stability and machine accuracy.

Speeds of up to 65 per minute for the 10 head and 90 packs per minute for the 14 head model can be achieved, depending on product characteristics and required target weight.

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GM LABELLING

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Label. This gives the interested consumer the opportunity to discriminate, while limiting the possible abuse of the system.

Groenewald also supports the USDA’s proposal in general for the uniformity it will bring and for “managing the threat of a mishmash of state regulations”.

In contrast to the regulation in South Africa, the USA move is a standard, he says. “One of the advantages of a standard is that it forces consensus building before enactment.

A similar process could have prevented all the ambiguities and flaws in the South African regulations.”.

Groenewald says he understands why the USA has chosen to use the term “bioengineered” instead of GM, since the USA has never really used GM as a defining parameter in its regulations. Rather, it opted to use existing legislation in a “Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology” in which each of the relevant agencies uses its own regulatory triggers.

The use of “bioengineered” may also be more inclusive, including possibly incorporating products developed from new and future GE techniques.

Another important difference Groenewald identifies is that the proposed USA standard will be for food only. That’s important, he says, because the DTI regulations use the term “goods”, which could include anything from underwear made from GM cotton to GM medicines.

All told, a good dose of common sense, peppered with transparency appears required to create the conditions for open debate on an extremely contentious topic.
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