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March 2026

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From the editor

The March edition of *Food & Beverage Reporter* is dedicated to the memory of our much-loved former editor, Bridget "Bee" Day.

Bee's journey in the food industry began in the late 1990s, working with Linda Jackson & Associates and later Von Holy Consulting. Her passion for words, design and communication grew through her time in the printing industry and later the Food Safety Network, where she played a pivotal role in developing the platform while building her knowledge of food safety and completing a BA in Linguistics.

Her career later included marketing leadership at Intertek, before co-founding *Food Focus* in 2015 and ultimately fulfilling a lifelong dream when she became editor of *Food & Beverage Reporter* after the publication was acquired in 2020.

Bee brought creativity, energy and genuine care to everything she did. Even after cancer returned, she continued working for as long as she could, stepping away from the business only when her health no longer allowed it.

Bridget was deeply committed to the industry and to the people within it. In that spirit, we will continue to honour her legacy by ensuring that Food & Beverage Reporter remains a trusted platform for the latest news, insights and trends shaping the food and beverage sector.

Her warmth, professionalism and passion will never be forgotten.

Simon

food & beverage REPORTER

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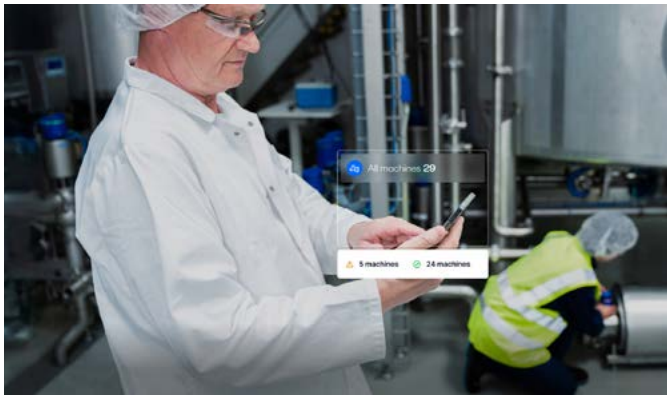
fbr Contents



fbr Contents

Autopack delivers fully automated sauce packaging line for P&B Foods

Packaging automation specialist Autopack has delivered a fully integrated automated packaging line for sauce producer P&B (Foods) Ltd, significantly boosting production efficiency and flexibility.

The bespoke system integrates five machines designed to handle a variety of viscous products, including sauces packaged in plastic and glass containers ranging from 250ml to 1 litre.

Operating at speeds of up to 100 containers per minute, the line includes a high-speed rotary unscrambler feeding containers into a 12-head alternating piston filler suitable for both hot and cold filling.

Downstream equipment includes a four-head automatic plastic screw capper, an MC100 metal capping machine and a multifunctional labelling system capable of front, wraparound and tamper-evident labelling.

According to P&B Foods project manager Safiq Shaikh, Autopack's experience in viscous food categories such as sauces and edible oils played a key role in the project's success.

Following the installation, the companies have expanded their collaboration with additional automation projects underway, including canning and glass filling lines for ghee products and a drum-filling system for edible oils.

Autopack UK sales director Jonathon Stewart said the project demonstrates the operational gains manufacturers can achieve through turnkey automation systems that integrate both process and packaging equipment.

Rooibos makes global TV cameo in Apple TV+ thriller

South Africa's iconic herbal infusion Rooibos has made an unexpected appearance in the global streaming drama Down Cemetery Road on Apple TV+,highlighting the growing international cultural footprint of the country's signature beverage.

The series, adapted by Morwenna Banks from the 2003 novel by Mick Herron, stars Emma Thompson and Ruth Wilson and is set in suburban Oxford.

In Season 1, Episode 3, titled "Filthy Work", Thompson's character, private investigator Zoë Boehm, suggests sharing a cup of "rooi-bosch tea" during a tense moment in the unfolding investigation.

According to Adele du Toit, spokesperson for the South African Rooibos Council, such references help reinforce Rooibos' growing global recognition.

"Every time Rooibos appears in international fiction or on screen, it strengthens awareness of South Africa's unique biodiversity and our homegrown flavours," she said The tea, produced exclusively from the plant Aspalathus linearis in the Cederberg region of the Western Cape, has gained popularity worldwide for its mild flavour, caffeine-free profile and antioxidant properties.

From literature such as The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series by Alexander McCall Smith to crime novels by Deon Meyer, Rooibos has increasingly become part of the storytelling fabric in global detective fiction.

Industry observers say these cultural moments are helping drive broader international familiarity with the South African brew.

Diageo warns spirits tax could exceed R100 per bottle

Government excise duties on spirits could exceed R100 per 750ml bottle for the first time if the customary annual increase is applied in the upcoming national budget, according to Diageo South Africa.

The warning comes ahead of the budget speech by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana.

According to Diageo's corporate relations director Sibani Mngadi, tax already represents between 55% and 65% of the retail price of mainstream spirits products.

"Government tax would become the single largest component of the consumer price, leaving little room for further increases," Mngadi said.

Excise duties have nearly doubled over the past decade, rising from approximately R52 per bottle in 2016 to potentially more than R100 in 2026.

The company argues that sustained increases have fuelled the expansion of illicit alcohol markets. A 2025 study by Euromonitor International estimates illicit trade now accounts for 18% of South Africa's alcohol market, resulting in roughly R11bn in lost tax revenue annually.

Diageo has called on government to pause further increases while the Treasury's review of alcohol excise policy continues, advocating for a more balanced taxation framework across beverage categories.

FoodBev SETA graduates 89 SMMEs from Wakanda Food Accelerator programme

The FoodBev Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority (FoodBev SETA) has celebrated the graduation of 89 small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) from the Wakanda Food Accelerator programme, marking a significant investment in South Africa's food and beverage manufacturing pipeline.

The graduates completed a 12-month training programme combining practical and theoretical modules designed to strengthen entrepreneurial capability in the sector. The graduation ceremony took place at the City of Johannesburg's Bramm Park offices on 3 March.

Participants earned a National Certificate in Food and Beverage Packaging Operations (NQF Level 3), accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority, equipping them with skills in food legislation compliance, HACCP protocols, packaging, merchandising and distribution.

According to FoodBev SETA CEO Nokuthula Selamolela, the initiative reflects the organisation's commitment to strengthening the manufacturing ecosystem through skills development and entrepreneurial growth.

"We believe that equipping entrepreneurs with the right skills and knowledge is essential for sustainable businesses and the continued growth of our industry," Selamolela said.

Programme participant Rirhandzu Chauke, owner of Conzas Biscuits in Soweto, said the training had equipped graduates with practical tools to expand their businesses and compete more effectively in the sector.

Miles Kubheka, CEO of the Wakanda Food Accelerator, described the programme as a "game-changer" for emerging food entrepreneurs.

FoodBev SETA says the programme forms part of its broader strategy to stimulate innovation, job creation and sustainable enterprise development across South Africa's food and beverage manufacturing sector.

Founder story: Why Jake Axelrod built a protein brand for pantries, not just gyms

When Jake Axelrod launched premium protein brand METALAB in 2020, his ambition was clear: challenge the conventions of the supplement industry and reposition protein as an everyday nutrition staple rather than a niche product for athletes.

Drawing on a background in nutrition, personal training and design, Axelrod built the company using personal savings and without external investors or formal business training. His strategy combined scientifically formulated products with strong brand identity, targeting consumers looking to integrate functional nutrition into daily routines at home.

A major growth milestone came in 2023 when one of the world's largest nutrition companies acquired a 50% stake in the business, providing capital and operational infrastructure to support expansion.

The brand reached a broader consumer audience in October 2025 with a nationwide retail launch in Checkers stores and on the Checkers Sixty60 platform, positioning premium protein products within everyday grocery categories.

METALAB's portfolio includes BRIDGE Whey, Truly Grass Fed, VEGAN and JUCY Clear Protein, alongside functional pantry products and collaborations with BOS Ice Tea and Terbodore Coffee.

All products are manufactured locally in an FSSC-certified facility, supporting South African production while prioritising ingredient quality and transparent formulation standards.

Driven by retail expansion, product innovation and strong community engagement, METALAB has rapidly emerged as one of South Africa's fastest-growing premium protein and functional nutrition brands.

Mondelēz International appoints Hisham Ezz El-Arab to lead Sub-Saharan Africa business

Global snacking company Mondelēz International has appointed Hisham Ezz El-Arab as president of its Sub-Saharan Africa business unit, signalling a strategic focus on growth in one of the world's fastest-expanding consumer markets.

Ezz El-Arab brings more than three decades of FMCG leadership experience, including senior roles at Danone and Procter & Gamble.

Most recently, he served as regional vice president for Asia, Middle East and Africa at Danone, where he oversaw business acceleration and strategic growth across markets spanning Morocco to the Philippines.

In his new role, he will oversee Mondelēz's regional portfolio, which includes global brands such as Cadbury, Oreo, Bournvita and Halls.

Ezz El-Arab said the region's strong consumer demand and the company's established distribution networks create a solid platform for long-term growth.

He holds a mechanical engineering degree from the American University in Cairo and has completed executive programmes at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, INSEAD, IMD Business School and IESE Business School.

Sidel achieves two sustainability recognitions at the SEAL Awards 2026

Sidel has won in two categories at the SEAL (Sustainability, Environmental Achievement and Leadership) Business Sustainability Awards 2026.

The first was given to the EvoBLOW Laser, a breakthrough for packaging in PET which received the Sustainable Innovation Award, and the second for the latest tunnel pasteuriser, SWING® Evo, which has been recognised for the Sustainable Product Award. Both highlight Sidel's game-changing solutions as they support beverage producers in contributing to a more sustainable future.

The EvoBLOW Laser is a breakthrough for performance and sustainability. It significantly reduces downtime, improves PET material distribution and control along the bottle, lowering PET use, with enhanced energy savings, less maintenance, and reduced preform waste of around 50% versus comparable halogen solutions. Sidel's EvoBLOW Laser also supports an increased and more efficient use of recycled PET (rPET), since it is less sensitive to material property variations. When processes or heating settings do need to be adapted, these adaptations are immediate with the EvoBLOW Laser, ensuring consistent quality from the first bottle to the last.

Sidel's SWING® Evo delivers significant sustainability advantages for non-alcoholic beverages and beer producers. Its counterflow configuration and dedicated heat and water circuits minimise heat dispersion and eliminate unnecessary circulation between tanks. Each module is independently controlled, allowing the system to adapt precisely to production needs.

"Sidel's SWING® Evo delivers significant sustainability advantages for non-alcoholic beverages and beer producers. "

Sidel's SWING® Evo pasteuriser can be equipped with PRINCE-E, the most advanced pasteurisation control system. PRINCE-E ensures a high-precision bactericidal effect while guaranteeing the absence of under-pasteurisation due to a predictive approach, with the software also incorporating new features to further reduce energy and cooling water consumption, offering enhanced reliability from fully automated operations.

www.sidel.com

NESCAFÉ Espresso Concentrate campaign taps influencers to showcase iced coffee culture

Nestlé launched NESCAFÉ Espresso Concentrate in South Africa through a creator-driven marketing campaign designed to showcase new ways of enjoying iced coffee at home.

The influencer-led activation focused on social media platforms including Instagram and TikTok, where local content creators teased the launch through cryptic posts featuring teal-coloured mystery boxes.

The campaign culminated in an experiential event in Rosebank, where influencers were invited to unlock the mystery boxes and experiment with ingredients to create personalised iced coffee drinks using NESCAFÉ Espresso Concentrate.

Each box contained mixers ranging from syrups and flavourings to unconventional ingredients such as tonic water and citrus juice. On-site mixologists helped transform the combinations into customised iced beverages, encouraging creators to share their results online using campaign hashtags.

According to Elizabeth Gichangi, Head of Marketing for Coffee at Nestlé East and Southern Africa Region, the campaign aimed to encourage experimentation rather than prescribe a specific way to use the product.

Over a 12-week rollout, the campaign generated more than four million social media impressions, with influencers producing reels, posts and short-form videos showcasing their own iced coffee "hacks".

The initiative positioned NESCAFÉ Espresso Concentrate as a versatile base for homemade iced coffee, while tapping into South Africa's growing social-media-driven coffee culture.

Darling Sweet expands fudge range with six new local flavours

South African confectionery brand Darling Sweet has expanded its fudge range with six new flavours, building on the success of its original launch in 2024.

Founded in 2014 by Hentie van der Merwe and Frits van Ryneveld, the company initially focused on traditional small-batch toffees and soft caramels made using classic methods and high-quality ingredients. Over the past decade the range has grown to include multiple toffee flavours, soft caramels and toffee spreads.

The move into fudge marked the next step in the brand's product development. The original launch featured a traditional fudge recipe rooted in the heritage of the Darling region, inspired by a recipe shared by former local fudge maker Hugh Davies.

Now the range has expanded with six new flavours designed around familiar South African tastes: Dolce Evita, Melktert, Moerkoffie, Strawberries & Cream, Rooibos and Salted Caramel.

According to van Ryneveld, the development process focused on flavours that resonate with local consumers, combining nostalgic favourites such as coffee and melktert with indulgent options like Strawberries & Cream.

Demand for the product has grown rapidly since its introduction, prompting the company to scale production and broaden the offering.

The fudge range is available through select retailers, delis, farm stalls, the brand's online store and the Darling tasting room. All products are certified Kosher and Halaal.

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Empowering essential oil producers: Accredited testing opening global markets

For essential oil producers, access to credible, internationally recognised testing can determine whether a product enters a premium export market. In local markets, it also influences buyer confidence, pricing power, and the ability to compete against imported or certified alternatives. Without accredited testing, producers risk delays, price pressure, or outright rejection.

Since achieving ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation in 2023, NMISA's Essential Oil Testing Services have enabled South African producers to access locally available, internationally recognised Certificates of Analysis (CoAs). This accredited capability streamlines compliance processes, reduces reliance on foreign laboratories, and strengthens the competitive positioning of local producers in both domestic and global markets.

Enabling market access for emerging producers

Historically, access to overseas analytical services was largely limited to established companies with sufficient financial resources. For emerging farmers and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the combined costs of international testing, hazardous material shipping, extended turnaround times, and foreign currency payments created significant barriers to market entry.

Recognising these constraints, the dtic, through the Global Quality and Standards Programme – South Africa (GQSP-SA), implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in collaboration with the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), supported the establishment of locally available, internationally accredited testing capacity within South Africa, with NMISA being the first of the three supported laboratories to achieve ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation, to broaden participation in the essential oils value chain and help level the playing field between established exporters and emerging producers.

As a result, producers who previously faced compliance-related exclusion are now better positioned to demonstrate quality, meet buyer requirements, and integrate into formal supply chains, unlocking opportunities that were previously inaccessible.

Why this matters for your business

Global and local buyers require verified and trustworthy data on purity, chemical composition,

and compliance with recognised standards. Without accredited testing, oils may be undervalued, export shipments delayed or rejected, buyers may insist on overseas testing, and overall compliance costs can increase significantly.

With SANAS-accredited testing from NMISA, organisations can:

- Obtain internationally recognised Certificates of Analysis
- Keep samples within South Africa
- Accelerate turnaround times
- Minimise hazardous material shipping costs

This translates directly into faster transactions and improved negotiating power.

One certificate. Internationally accepted quality assurance

Producers previously had to approach multiple laboratories for different analyses. NMISA offers consolidated testing, providing a comprehensive quality evaluation under a single Certificate of Analysis. This streamlined approach reduces administrative complexity and ensures consistency in reporting, qualities highly valued by international buyers.

South African indigenous oils should not be measured against standards developed for plants grown in different climates and regions. NMISA contributes by testing the indigenous oils against South African national standards to ensure fair, scientifically appropriate benchmarks for local products. For producers working with indigenous species, this strengthens market credibility and long-term value.

To maintain international confidence, NMISA participates in international proficiency testing (PT) programmes and maintains strict quality control systems. Successful participation in international PT schemes confirms analytical accuracy and measurement integrity. For producers, this means your test results stand up to international scrutiny.

Calibration and measurement confidence

Measurement confidence begins before the oil reaches the laboratory. NMISA also provides calibration services for critical equipment such as balances, thermometers, data loggers, glassware, and other essential measuring instruments, ensuring that all measurements are accurate and traceable to international standards. Accurate production measurements reduce batch variability, support consistency, and strengthen compliance documentation.

Commercial advantage

Accredited testing is not just a regulatory requirement; it is a commercial advantage. Producers who can demonstrate verified quality and compliance are better positioned to access premium export markets, compete locally, strengthen buyer confidence, negotiate improved pricing, and reduce risk at customs.

NMISA's role is to provide trusted, internationally recognised measurement results that support your growth in competitive global markets.

For more information on NMISA's Essential Oil Services, contact ari@nmisa.org or +27 12 947 2736 / 2842.

Author
Christelle Lourens, National Metrology Institute of South Africa

FoodBev SETA hosts research colloquium to shape industry through evidence-based skills planning

Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela, delivered the keynote address

Research is a strategic instrument for gathering data, expanding knowledge targeted for decision making for guiding skills planning and policy direction leads to economic growth and social transformation.

"Our focus is on building a capable, development state supported by high-quality research, responsive qualifications, and integrated skills system".

These were the words of the Honourable Buti Manamela, Minister of Higher Education and Training, who delivered the keynote address at the inaugural Research Colloquium hosted by FoodBev SETA at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) in March 2026.

The Minister highlighted the importance of evidence-based planning within South Africa's Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system and reaffirmed the Department's commitment to strengthening research as a foundation for national development and informed skills policy.

The Colloquium brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from across the skills ecosystem. Representatives from various SETAs and institutions within the PSET system were joined by employers and industry associations in the food and beverage manufacturing sector, academics, trade unions and beneficiaries of FoodBev SETA programmes.

More than just a platform to present research findings, the Colloquium created an opportunity to reflect on what current research is telling us about the sector and how those insights should inform future qualifications, curricula and training programmes. The event focused on five key objectives: showcasing research, stimulating meaningful dialogue, sharing knowledge, strengthening networks and encouraging collaboration across the sector.

FoodBev SETA Chairperson, Mr Siyabulela Ngcukana, described the gathering as "a significant and memorable step forward" for the organisation. He noted that the Colloquium marks the beginning of FoodBev SETA's intention to host similar platforms in the future, ensuring that research does not simply sit on shelves, but instead informs discussion, partnerships and real sector change.

The Foodbev SETA Chief Executive Officer Ms Nokuthula Selamolela echoed this sentiment, emphasising the importance of translating research into practical insight. "We must understand what works, what doesn't and why. Our investment in research must help us better understand where

the sector is going, what skills will be required and whether our current interventions are aligned with industry needs," she said.

One of the key discussions throughout the day centred on the complexity of developing relevant skills and qualifications. Participants acknowledged that qualification development cannot happen in isolation. Employers, manufacturing bodies, professional associations, chambers, unions and communities all have a role to play in shaping qualifications that are relevant, adaptable and transferable.

As the sector evolves, so too must the skills of its workforce. Employees need to be equipped not only with current technical competencies but also with the ability to reskill and upskill as industries change in response to technological and economic shifts.

Three plenary sessions anchored the day's programme and continued into focused breakout discussions:

- **Skills Formation and Planning** in the Age of Modernisation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, moderated by Prof Arnesh Telukdarie from the University of Johannesburg, explored how predictive data and strategic foresight can help anticipate future skills needs in the sector.

- **Getting Skills Right and Reimagining Qualification Development** in the Food and Beverages Manufacturing Sector, moderated by Prof Stephanie Allais from Wits University, examined the challenge of aligning qualifications with industry needs while maintaining flexibility and broader applicability.

- **Food Science and Technology:** Shaping the Future of Food and Beverage Manufacturing, moderated by Prof Lues Ryk from the Central University of Technology, focused on innovation, emerging technologies in the food science and technology field and the competencies required in a rapidly evolving food and beverages manufacturing environment.

"Through collaboration, evidence-based planning and stronger partnerships between academia and industry, FoodBev SETA continues to position itself as a strategic enabler of sustainable skills development in the food and beverages manufacturing sector"

Artificial intelligence was another key theme that emerged throughout the discussions. While delegates acknowledged that technological advances may displace certain roles, there was also recognition that these developments will create new and more complex skills requirements.

Rather than viewing artificial intelligence solely as automation, many participants emphasised the opportunity to collaborate with technology in ways that enhance productivity, innovation and human capability.

The Colloquium also highlighted the importance of strengthening the relationship between higher education and industry. Employers increasingly require training that responds not only to current needs but also anticipates skills demands several years into the future.

With large volumes of data available, the challenge now lies in improving predictive capabilities and asking the right questions: What does the data tell us? What are we missing? And how should we respond?

A recurring theme throughout the day was the need for intentionality in how the sector approaches skills development deliberate collaboration, planning and action.

Ultimately, the Research Colloquium reinforced a simple but important message: research must not exist for its own sake. It should serve as a catalyst for growth, entrepreneurship and a more competitive sector.

Through collaboration, evidence-based planning and stronger partnerships between academia and industry, FoodBev SETA continues to position itself as a strategic enabler of sustainable skills development in the food and beverages manufacturing sector.

Stakeholders, researchers and industry partners are encouraged to engage with FoodBev SETA's growing body of research. Past research reports, sector studies and publications are available on the FoodBev SETA website at www.foodbev.co.za, providing valuable insights into skills trends, industry developments and evidence that informs the sector's skills planning and policy direction.

A fresh approach to dairy processing

Process instrumentation ensures safe storage in the dairy industry

Protecting the quality and safety of milk throughout production is a core priority for every dairy operation. One of the most critical stages is raw milk storage, where milk is kept chilled before further processing. At this point, precise and reliable process instrumentation becomes essential. Accurate measurement of level, pressure, and point level ensures that storage conditions remain stable, hygienic, and fully compliant with industry standards.

Maintaining milk quality through precise measurement

Raw milk storage forms the backbone of the dairy production chain. Milk is cooled to 4 °C and continuously agitated to prevent spoilage, and the effectiveness of this stage depends on three key measurements:

- Level measurement prevents shortages or overflow.
- Pressure measurement maintains slight overpressure to protect against contamination.
- Point level detection ensures tanks never run dry or exceed capacity.

Because milk is highly sensitive to contamination, all equipment in contact with the product must meet strict hygiene requirements. This includes the use of certified materials that comply with FDA and EC 1935/2004 regulations, ensuring safe operation and preventing bacterial growth.

Ensuring reliable and hygienic milk storage

VEGABAR pressure transmitters are engineered specifically for hygienic applications, making them exceptionally well suited to dairy environments. They provide dependable measurement of both milk level and process pressure within storage tanks. Built from FDA and EC compliant materials, these instruments support hygienic operation throughout the entire storage cycle. Their robust diaphragms withstand high pressures and the vacuum conditions that occur during tank cleaning.

The VEGABAR 83 stands out for its welded measuring cell, which eliminates seals and therefore removes a common source of contamination risk. Its seal less design supports stringent hygiene requirements while simplifying maintenance. Unlike traditional systems that rely on capillary lines—often complex and prone to drift—the VEGABAR series uses electronic differential pressure measurement, offering greater accuracy and reliability with far less upkeep.

For point level detection, the VEGASWING 61 provides a versatile and highly dependable solution. This vibrating level switch delivers millimetre accurate limit detection regardless of mounting position and is suitable for a wide range of liquids. It serves as both an empty and full detector, offering robust protection against overfilling and dry run conditions in tanks and pipelines. With multiple process fittings, housings, and approvals available, the VEGASWING 61 adapts easily to the specific needs of individual dairies.

Optimising dairy operations through advanced instrumentation

Modern process instrumentation is indispensable for ensuring safe, efficient, and hygienic storage of raw milk. Devices such as the VEGABAR 83 and VEGASWING 61 provide the accuracy, reliability, and compliance needed to detect issues early, maintain stable storage conditions, and support consistent product quality. By integrating these technologies, dairy producers can streamline operations, reduce maintenance demands, and uphold the highest standards of safety and efficiency.

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New synergies spark MSU AgBio Research's vision for a smarter, more sustainable dairy system

Global partnerships anchored at MSU are aiming to create new pathways that reward farmers and advance resilient dairy systems in the U.S. There's no question Michigan State University's new $75-million state-of-the-art Dairy Cattle Teaching and Research Center is impressive to the eye.

Over 650 cows housed in a 165,000-square-foot barn interacting with cutting-edge technology like automatic milking robots and advanced feed systems — while also being supported by MSU's Anaerobic Digestion Research and Extension Center (ADREC) where organic waste is transformed into a public asset — makes this a world-class facility.

But what also makes this facility one of a kind isn't its design, but the opportunities it's creating for dynamic partnerships to come alive and lead the next wave of dairy innovation.

Keith Kenny and Mark Brooking see the potential. In February, the two traveled from the U.K. to tour the center and explore how approaches already being deployed at scale within dairy supply chains in the U.K. could be adopted into U.S. operations and supply chains.

Kenny, a former vice president of sustainability at McDonald's, is the co-founder of Tellus Mater, a U.K.-based company finding market-based solutions by connecting farmers and consumer businesses through a natural capital infrastructure. The model he and his team have built evolves, expands and internationalises one that's already embedded within First Milk, a British farmer-owned dairy cooperative representing more than 700 producers, where Brooking serves as chief impact officer.

MSU, they believe, is the place where these concepts can be taken up and grown across the U.S.

"We set up the Tellus Mater platform because we felt there's a fundamental failure in the food supply chain where farmers aren't rewarded for producing food well," Kenny said. "That's something we've set out to change. What excites us is that from the very first minute we spoke with MSU leaders, we were all completely aligned on what's missing: Farmers need to be rewarded for doing things right. We're working with MSU to help make that a reality in the U.S."

George Smith, director of MSU AgBioResearch, and Ian Olson, executive in residence of supply chain resiliency at MSU, visited Kenny, Brooking and other U.K. dairy leaders in Scotland last September to witness this practice in action.

"The mission of AgBioResearch is to advance agriculture, sustain natural resources, boost economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life for those in Michigan and beyond," Smith said. "What I saw on our trip to Scotland does that. MSU has world-renowned scientists — from our experts at ADREC to our scholars at the MSU Center for Regenerative Agriculture— doing research to advance regenerative ag principles, where food systems work with the environment and the livelihoods of people, not against them. We welcome any opportunity to bolster this work. Tellus Mater shows how we can."

Agriculture is an economic powerhouse in Michigan, contributing $125.8 billion to the state's economy each year, according to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Within it, the dairy

industry sits atop, generating approximately $15.7 billion annually.

Olson said to keep the industry a predominant force not only in Michigan but in the country, where it ranks first for production of milk per cow and sixth for overall milk output, a holistic look at the supply chain is needed to continue giving farmers clear pathways for success.

"A key customer of First Milk is Nestlé, which has an agreement with the co-op to reward farmers who actively work to lessen their environmental footprint and safeguard the natural resources on their land."

"

I've known Keith since my time at McDonald's helping direct global sustainability efforts, and I've always appreciated his insight on what needs to happen at the producer level for solutions to be adopted," Olson said. "Solutions need to make sense financially for the producer. What First Milk and Tellus Mater have done, and what we can do here, is to better ensure farmers are rewarded while investing in the natural capital that's critical to future food production, such as healthy and resilient lands and water systems."

Brooking, a farmer and sustainability leader working at a cooperative and supply-chain scale, has seen that virtuous cycle firsthand, where supply chains support farmers who support the environment, which in turn allows the environment to support farmers who can then contribute to supply chains.

A key customer of First Milk is Nestlé, which has an agreement with the co-op to reward farmers who actively work to lessen their environmental footprint and safeguard the natural resources on their land.

It's all about working together, Brooking said. It doesn't matter where you're at in the supply chain or where you're at in the world. There are steps each player can take to strengthen food systems while protecting the land and promoting ecological function.

"There is only one planet," Brooking said. "Whether you're farming in the U.K. or the U.S., the challenges are shared. Farmers hold enormous power to work with nature to address them. Our responsibility is to ensure farmers are recognised and rewarded for doing so."

For Brooking and Kenny, MSU represents a unique opportunity to connect farmer-led practice, scientific rigor and market incentives at a scale not yet seen in the U.S.

Ingredient innovation is reshaping South Africa's dairy economics

South Africa's dairy processors are operating in a market defined by tight margins, volatile input costs and increasingly exacting retail partners and. growth is difficult to extract from volume alone. What is shifting, however, is the role of ingredients. The most meaningful innovation in dairy beverages, yoghurt and cheese is now happening at formulation level, and it is beginning to reshape value creation.

Recent ingredient launches reveal a clear direction of higher protein density, better utilisation of side streams, improved functionality in hybrid and plant systems, and measurable traceability. These are not passing themes but responses to structural pressure in both supply chains and consumer demand.

Protein reformulated for versatility

Protein has moved beyond fortification claims. It is being engineered for clarity, heat stability and sensory neutrality, allowing dairy proteins to enter formats that were previously difficult to execute.

Developments from Arla Foods Ingredients illustrate the shift. Hydrolysed whey systems are being used in drinking yoghurts delivering upwards of 20g protein per serving. Whey isolates are formulated into clear beverages without turbidity. Protein is also appearing in snack-adjacent dairy formats and experimental carbonated dairy drinks.

What matters here is not novelty for its own sake. It is flexibility. When whey proteins can perform in ambient beverages or low-viscosity systems, they expand the addressable market for dairy solids.

For South African processors, the implications are practical:

- Whey streams gain strategic value rather than remaining secondary outputs.
- Beverage channels — particularly convenience retail — become accessible to dairy beyond flavoured milk.
- Protein concentration provides a pricing architecture less exposed to commodity swings.

Protein density is increasingly associated with satiety and functionality. That perception provides resilience in a price-sensitive market.

> **"Protein is no longer a claim — it is a formulation strategy that determines margin, format flexibility and market positioning"**

From effluent to ingredient platform

The reworking of acid whey into functional inputs marks a notable operational shift. Strained yoghurt production traditionally generates high volumes of acidic whey, often treated as waste.

Ingredient platforms developed by suppliers such as Arla Foods Ingredients demonstrate how this by-product can be refined into beverage-compatible protein systems or reintegrated into fermented bases.

For South African producers, this is less about sustainability messaging and more about resource efficiency. Effluent treatment, water usage and solids loss all carry financial weight. Recovering value from

side streams improves yield and reduces disposal burdens simultaneously.

Retailers are also placing greater emphasis on environmental metrics within supplier assessments. Being able to demonstrate reduced waste intensity or improved solids recovery strengthens commercial positioning.

Circular processing is therefore becoming part of core operations rather than corporate communication.

"When whey shifts from effluent to ingredient platform, sustainability becomes operational performance, not marketing language"

Alternative dairy: Technical progress over rhetoric

Plant-based dairy has moved into a more technical phase. Early growth was driven by consumer curiosity and ethical positioning. Current development is focused on performance, especially in cheese analogues and high-protein beverages.

Neutral-flavour pulse and fava protein systems are being refined to reduce off-notes and improve solubility. Enzyme technologies from companies such as Ajinomoto are addressing melt and stretch limitations in plant-based cheese. Functional citrus fibres are replacing synthetic stabilisers while improving texture.

For the South African market, where dairy remains culturally entrenched, the more relevant opportunity may lie in hybrid systems. Blending dairy proteins with plant inputs can moderate costs, improve nutritional positioning and reduce environmental impact per unit — without requiring full substitution.

Hybrid formulations also offer supply flexibility. In periods of raw milk price pressure, partial plant inclusion can buffer margins. In periods of milk abundance, dairy inclusion can be adjusted upward.

The key shift is technical capability. Ingredient systems are making blended models viable at scale.

Clean label as commercial requirement

Shorter ingredient lists and recognisable components are no longer confined to niche brands. Major retailers increasingly incorporate traceability and additive reduction into supplier frameworks.

Multifunctional ingredients are central to this transition. Citrus-derived fibres, for example, can stabilise, bind water and enhance mouthfeel. Advanced dairy proteins can contribute both structure and nutritional claims. When a single ingredient performs multiple roles, formulation complexity declines.

Traceability now extends beyond ingredient names. Retail buyers expect origin documentation, processing transparency and in some cases lifecycle data. Ingredient suppliers are becoming technical partners rather than commodity vendors.

For South African processors, this demands closer collaboration upstream. Compliance and transparency must be integrated into sourcing decisions rather than layered on at audit stage.

Format expansion and channel opportunity

Ingredient innovation is also enabling format diversification. Clear protein beverages, squeezable high-protein cheese formats and low-viscosity cultured drinks point to new consumption occasions.

South Africa's dairy beverage category remains relatively concentrated in flavoured milk and traditional drinking yoghurt. High-protein RTDs and whey-based ambient drinks are under-represented compared to North American and European markets.

Improved protein clarity and heat stability reduce technical risk in launching such products. Combined with growing convenience retail footprints, this creates an opportunity for dairy to compete more directly in the functional beverage space.

Cheese is also being reformulated. Enzyme optimisation supports improved melt in reduced-fat formats. Protein enrichment enables repositioning of cheese snacks as functional offerings. Fibre systems assist with moisture management and sliceability.

These developments do not require radical capital expenditure in every case. Many rely on ingredient substitution and process refinement rather than entirely new production lines.

Operational leverage through ingredients

The broader pattern is clear: ingredient capability is becoming a lever for operational control.

- Protein concentration protects margin and supports premium positioning.
- Side-stream recovery improves yield and reduces waste costs.
- Hybrid systems introduce formulation flexibility.
- Multifunctional ingredients simplify labels while maintaining performance.

"In a constrained market, formulation is one of the few variables processors can still control — and increasingly, it is the most strategic"

In an environment where external pressures such as energy pricing, logistics constraints, consumer spending limits are difficult to manage, formulation offers a controllable variable.

South Africa's dairy industry has historically competed on efficiency and scale. Those attributes remain important. However, ingredient sophistication is increasingly separating commodity output from value-added portfolios.

The processors that invest in filtration, enzyme optimisation, fibre functionality and traceable sourcing will be better positioned to negotiate with retailers, respond to cost volatility and explore new channels.

A measured but decisive shift

Global ingredient innovation is not suggesting that traditional dairy formats will disappear. Milk, yoghurt and cheese remain staples. What is changing is how they are built and how flexibly they can be adapted.

Companies such as Arla Foods Ingredients and Ajinomoto are demonstrating that protein systems, enzyme technologies and by-product valorisation can alter category economics.

For South Africa, the question is not whether to follow every global concept. It is whether to extract the underlying lessons: improve solids recovery, increase protein versatility, reduce formulation complexity and build transparent supply chains.

Dairy's next phase of competitiveness will be shaped less by incremental line extensions and more by what happens in the blending tank and filtration unit. Ingredient strategy is becoming business strategy and for processors willing to engage with it, the returns are measurable.

Danone SA recognised as #1 in driving healthier food environments

Danone Southern Africa has been ranked first in a national public assessment evaluating voluntary industry commitments to healthier food environments.[1]

The assessment, conducted by the University of Cape Town in partnership with the South African Medical Research Council and other institutions, reviewed 29 leading food and beverage companies using the globally recognised INFORMAS Business Impact Assessment (BIA) Obesity tool. Danone achieved a score of 83 out of 100, the highest of all participating companies - reflecting the strength of its nutrition policies and its mission to deliver health through food to as many people as possible.

The report underscores the need for priority actions from industry to help shift South Africa towards healthier food environments. These include product reformulation to reduce sodium, saturated fat, trans fat and sugar; providing clear and accessible nutrition labelling; and ensuring that nutritious choices are both widely available and affordable. In a country where many families face the daily challenge of "nutrition versus affordability," the sector has a critical responsibility to help close this gap.

Danone ranked #1 in the domains of Product Formulation, Nutrition Labelling and Product Accessibility, demonstrating a concrete commitment to expanding the availability and affordability of healthier options.

"Our mission speaks not only to the nutritional quality of our products, but also to their reach, ensuring we deliver accessible nutrition through everyday dairy foods, available in every store," said Leanne Kiezer,

www.danone.co.za

Reference
1. https://foodsamsa.samrc.ac.za/FOODSAMSA%20Report%20WP2.pdf
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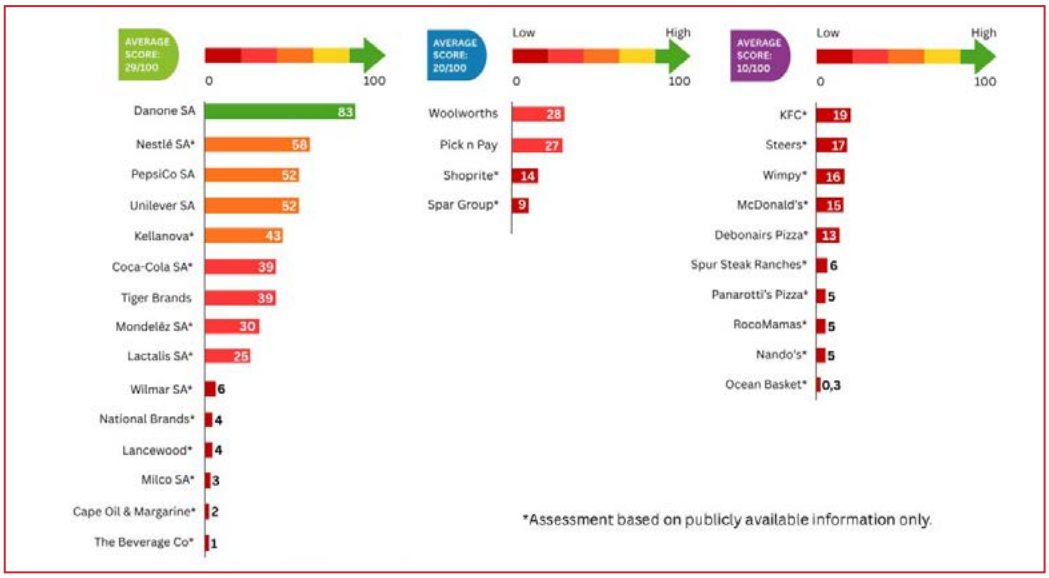


Does water management need artificial intelligence?

The right combination of data and algorithms can produce astounding improvements in efficiency, speed, and oversight. While many water utilities already use digital monitoring and analytics to manage operations, artificial intelligence builds on these capabilities by identifying patterns in large datasets, enabling predictive insights, and supporting more informed decision-making. Utility managers are taking note, with around 15% of large water utilities across the world using artificial intelligence, set to reach 30% by 2026, according to the **Xylem Water Technology Trends 2025** report. By 2035, three-quarters of water utilities will use some form of AI.

With aging infrastructure, climate variability, and rising water demand placing increasing pressure on water systems, utilities are seeking more resilient and adaptive ways to manage operations. Data-driven and AI-enabled tools are emerging as part of this broader digital water transformation.

Experts have good reason to be optimistic about AI adoption in the sector. Already, digital water management systems are producing excellent results. For example, Yorkshire Water Services in the UK uses Xylem Vue digital services reported a reduction in v**isible leaks by 57% while still reducing annual distribution main repairs by 30%.**

Similar digital and AI-driven capabilities are also expanding into industrial water and wastewater operations, where predictive monitoring and process optimisation help improve compliance, reliability, and resource efficiency.

Such outcomes show the hidden capacity at every water management site, says Chetan Mistry, Strategy and Marketing Manager at Xylem Africa, WSS.

"Water distribution and treatment sites produce far more data than they use. But that data gets neglected because of capacity. It would take an enormous amount of time to organise and study the data for patterns and insights. Digital and AI systems are solving those problems. Digital systems record and share accurate and reliable data, which AI systems use to rapidly produce planning information, automation, and other improvements."

Water management sites utilise smart data and AI services in several ways, including:

Real-time process adjustment

Water treatment is at its best when the system can maintain consistency, a laborious task since water flows keep changing. Intelligent water systems add intelligence that adjusts processes such as reagent dosing and treatment line control in real time. Site operators define specific scenarios that automatically adjust operations using information from external technologies such as water management applications and business intelligence systems.

Predictive demand and optimisation

AI systems predict conditions to manage demand and optimisation. Predictive maintenance systems rely on predictive analytics and AI-driven models, which use performance data and systems such as digital twins to anticipate maintenance conditions for equipment. Similar technologies have expanded to help water managers forecast demand, such as consumption peaks. They also optimise energy consumption by adjusting operations based on demand.

Advanced metering infrastructure

Smart meters have radically improved water distribution's performance and efficiency, using digital technologies to gauge consumption and feed reliable data into water planning systems. Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is the next step in that journey. AMI performs remote reading and integrates and processes information into AI systems, vastly reducing information intervals towards almost real-time monitoring and feedback.

Decision support systems

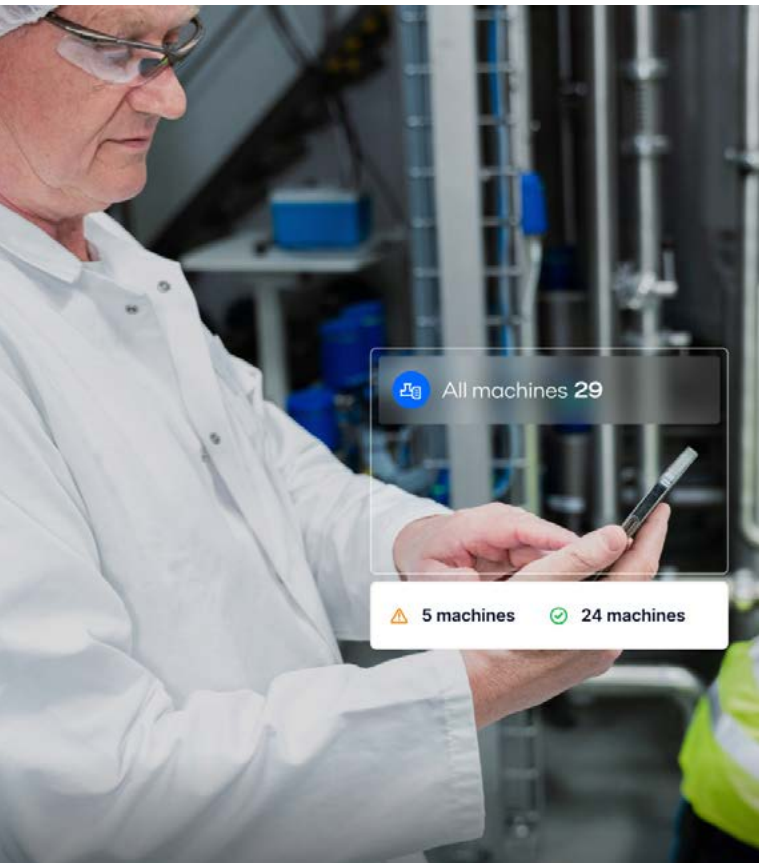
Water utilities are using decision support systems (DSS) to inform real-time, medium, and long-term planning and management. DSS tools use AI to analyse large datasets and information from different disciplines, including data from hydrological and meteorological stations, expert knowledge, and local inputs. This analysis models different situations, from simulating water bodies to predicting usage patterns.

While these and other data-driven improvements sound very attractive, utility and infrastructure managers are not always sure where to start. Successful deployment depends on data quality, integration with existing infrastructure, and organisational readiness. Deploying digitisation can become complicated, which is why leading water technology OEMs **develop and maintain extensive software platforms** designed to meet water utility challenges.

"Companies like Xylem invest substantially in developing water management platforms that are secure, simple to deploy, and make sure the data remain with the utility," says Mistry. "They create interactive and customisable dashboards and reports, which authorised staff and contractors can access on-site through smart devices and computers."

The real advantage of using data-driven water management platforms is not just in the new features. It enables utilities to leverage information they already have: "Data that does nothing only takes up space. But data made useful through cloud-based management software opens additional dimensions for planning and predictive actions such as maintenance."

Smarter maintenance, resource-efficient operations with AI-based condition monitoring



Unplanned downtime costs manufacturers billions of euros in lost revenue each year. Idle process lines cause product loss, extra cleaning, production delays, wasted water and potential damage to machinery. The AI-based condition monitoring solution Clariot from Alfa Laval provides 24/7 surveillance and actionable insights that enhance uptime and optimise resource efficiency.

"We developed our next generation condition monitoring solution Clariot based on our extensive experience from more than 3,000 condition monitoring units already operating worldwide", says Torsten Pedersen, Commercial Head Condition Monitoring at Alfa Laval Fluid Handling. "We can now offer a complete digital handshake, tailored for use in even the most demanding hygienic processes in food and pharma."

"In hygienic processing, unplanned downtime is not just costly, it is disruptive to quality, safety and compliance. Clario provides 24/7 monitoring, alerts and diagnostics for pumps and other rotating equipment"

"Our customers are on the lookout for solutions that ensure high uptime and reduce resource waste. Online condition monitoring with Clariot has proven to make a difference, proactively detecting machine failures before they occur and allowing process lines to run at full capacity without unnecessary interruptions", says Torsten Pedersen.

Online condition monitoring is an important next step in the accelerating digitalisation of hygienic production environments and in implementing predictive maintenance.

"We firmly believe that predictive maintenance is the future, enabled by sensor data, AI-driven insights and digital connectivity. Time and again we have seen how our condition monitoring solutions have alerted operators to potential failures before they happen and formed the basis for effective predictive maintenance strategies", says Torsten Pedersen,

Clariot is a standalone system, enabling maximum cybersecurity by operating independently from internal business-critical systems. The user interface is intuitive, installation is simple, and Clariot is compatible with most equipment brands.

To assist decision-makers and buyers, Alfa Laval has developed a Buyer's Guide to condition monitoring in hygienic industries with detailed information about maintenance strategies, selection and implementation of the right solution and highlighting customer benefits.

DOWNLOAD GUIDELINE HERE

www.alfalaval.com

Permitted uses of spirulina-based blue colours following GNT's petition

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the permitted uses of spirulina extract as a colour additive to all foods generally, supporting broader use of natural blues across the U.S. food industry

Spirulina extract was the first natural blue colour additive approved for food use in the United States. Its permitted uses have expanded incrementally through multiple regulatory amendments, including approval for use in beverages in 2022.

Each of these expansions was supported by petitions filed by GNT, which creates EXBERRY® colours from non-GMO fruit, vegetables, and plants. There has also been sustained investment in the technical capabilities, quality systems, and supply infrastructure required for reliable commercialisation of spirulina-based colours.

This update is particularly relevant for bakery applications, where demand for natural green tones continues to grow and often depends on access to natural blue Colour solutions. Historically, spirulina extract has been used in decorations, fillings, and coatings, with more limited use directly in baked doughs and batters. Clearer regulatory pathways now support more confident planning for plant-based

Colour solutions in these applications, including pistachio- and matcha-inspired Flavors and seasonal offerings.

"With more natural blue options now permitted, the focus is on helping manufacturers understand what's possible," said Jane MacDonald, Director of Technical Development at GNT USA. "GNT brings regulatory experience and technical application expertise to support informed decision-making, as customers evaluate natural blue solutions within their specific formulations and commercial goals."

As part of the same communication, the FDA also addressed how manufacturers may use voluntary labelling claims related to the absence of FD&C colours on food labels, a move intended to support the industry's transition away from synthetic dyes.

The agency said, "companies will now have flexibility to claim products contain 'no artificial colours' when the products do not contain petroleum-based colours."

Such claims were previously limited to food and drink that did not contain any type of added colouring ingredients.

The announcement provides additional guidance for companies using EXBERRY® plant-based colours as they consider on-pack claims alongside formulation changes.

READ THE FDA'S ANNOUNCEMENT HERE

Generation Alpha explained: tasting tomorrow's trends today

A recent study by Symrise across Europe, Africa and the Middle East reveal how generation alpha shapes choices of food and beverages. By combining in-depth qualitative and broad quantitative research, Symrise helps customers to accelerate advantage and delivers a comprehensive and unique understanding of the youngest consumers' preferences, behaviours, and influence on family decisions. These insights empower brands to anticipate emerging trends, create products that truly resonate, and build lasting connections with 2 billion adolescents shaping the markets of tomorrow

A new generation brings fresh opportunities for innovation. Symrise's EAME Food & Beverage Business Unit explores generation alpha's eating and drinking behaviours, recognising their growing influence on household purchases and future market trends. Customers gain a headstart in developing products that resonate with the youngest consumers and their families.

Two-phase study unlocking next-gen needs

The study features two distinct research approaches. In the qualitative phase, Symrise conducted video ethnography with 24 participants across four countries. Insights from UK, Poland, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia captured real-life perspectives on how Gen Alpha shapes family food and drink choices. "The video ethnography delivers valuable insights by allowing us to experience Generation Alpha's influence and preferences firsthand," says Micaela Kraft, SCI Project Leader EAME.

The quantitative phase surveyed 2,618 participants including children aged 6 to 14 and their parents across 11 countries. Covering UK, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Pakistan, this dual approach reveals how Generation Alpha's tastes, values, and digital habits differ from previous generations. "Generation Alpha increasingly values exploring new food experiences. Our research shows that 64% of participants enjoy trying cuisines from other countries," explains Micaela. "These insights enable us to help our customers create concepts that appeal to both children and parents."

Comprehensive overview over multiple generations

Symrise's generational framework now extends

from baby boomers to generation alpha, offering a comprehensive view of evolving consumer needs. The Generation Alpha persona "Tala" developed by Symrise for instance shows how strongly children are already shaping purchasing decisions today: The 9-year-old girl from Saudi Arabia discovers new tastes via social media, prefers international cuisine and at the same time expects products that combine enjoyment and health. These findings in conjunction with Symvision AI™ give rise to validated product ideas: At Gulfood Manufacturing 2025, for example, Symrise combined popcorn with coconut water and pineapple flavour ("Poptail Bliss") – a snack concept with Nutri-Score A that combines fun for children and functional added value for parents. These results empower partners to co-create innovative food and beverage concepts, ensuring relevance and appeal in a rapidly changing market. On top, the findings highlight the cohort's strong sway over family shopping, their openness to new flavours, and their desire for experiences that blend fun, health, and sustainability.

"Generation Alpha fascinates us with their curiosity, creativity, and influence on family choices. Exploring their world has given us fresh perspectives and valuable insights. By understanding their preferences today, we help our customers create products that win hearts and taste buds tomorrow," says Lisa Wilks, Marketing Director F&B EAME, Symrise.

"Generation Alpha fascinates us with their curiosity, creativity, and influence on family choices. Exploring their world has given us fresh perspectives and valuable insights. By understanding their preferences today, we help our customers create products that win hearts and taste buds tomorrow," says Lisa Wilks, Marketing Director F&B EAME, Symrise.

Outlook

The findings from the study will enable Symrise to continually anticipate consumer trends at an early stage in the future. In this way, it can reliably support partners in the development of products that contribute to the wishes and brand preferences of Generation Alpha today and tomorrow.

www.symrise.com

Budgeting for brains: Strengthening South Africa's investment in the first 1,000 Days

South Africa has made a clear and encouraging commitment to its youngest citizens. In his recent address, President Cyril Ramaphosa reaffirmed government's intention to end child stunting by 2030, stated during the **State of the Nation Address:**

More than a quarter of South African children under the age of five are stunted... In 2026, the state will embark on a mission to end child stunting by 2030 and tackle malnutrition among young children."

This commitment, aligned with the National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children, represents a pivotal moment. It signals recognition at the highest level that nutrition in early life is not only a social priority, but a national development imperative.

The question now is not whether we invest in children. We are.

The question is how we optimise that investment for maximum long-term return.

The first 1,000 days: Where economic potential is formed

Much of the current public conversation rightly focuses on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The 2026 National Budget's allocation to expand ECD access reflects a strong commitment to school readiness and foundational learning.

Yet stunting does not begin in a classroom.

It begins during pregnancy and in the first two years of life, the first 1,000 days, when brain architecture, immune systems and physical growth are developing at extraordinary speed. If nutrition is inadequate during this window, the effects on cognitive development and lifetime productivity are profound and often irreversible.

By the time a child enters an ECD centre, much of the neurological foundation has already been laid.

This is why the President's emphasis on early nutrition is so important. It recognises that ECD expansion and stunting reduction efforts are complementary, but not identical. Access to early learning must be matched by physiological readiness to learn.

"More than a quarter of South African children under the age of five are stunted... In 2026, the state will embark on a mission to end child stunting by 2030 and tackle malnutrition among young children."

From social priority to economic strategy

For National Treasury and corporate South Africa, the first 1,000 days represent one of the highest-return investment opportunities available.

Preventing stunting is associated with:

- Improved educational outcomes.
- Higher lifetime earnings.
- Reduced healthcare costs.
- Greater workforce productivity.
- A stronger future tax base.

In economic terms, early nutrition is human capital formation at its most foundational level.

When viewed through this lens, funding for early-life nutrition is not merely social expenditure. It is long-term economic infrastructure.

Aligning public and private capital

Government has articulated a clear national objective. The opportunity now is alignment.

Corporate social investment in South Africa exceeds R13 billion annually, with a significant proportion directed towards education and community development. By strategically aligning a portion of this capital with the national anti-stunting mission, the private sector can amplify impact while supporting a defined government priority.

This is not about creating parallel systems or critiquing existing allocations. It is about reinforcing them.

Programmes that expand ECD access, such as the Bana Pele ECD Registration Drive, play a critical role in bringing children into structured early learning environments.

Strengthening nutrition in the first 1,000 days ensures that those children are cognitively and physically prepared to benefit fully from that access.

The two investments are mutually reinforcing.

A targeted contribution: Specialised nutrition in the first 1,000 days

Compact Food Solutions SA operates within this specific window.

We are not ECD providers. We do not manage centres or curricula. Our expertise lies in the development and manufacture of specialised nutritional products, including Lipid Based Nutrient Supplements (LNS), designed to prevent and treat malnutrition during the earliest and most vulnerable stages of life.

Our contribution is technical and focused:

- Supporting nutritional interventions for pregnant women and young children.
- Providing evidence-based solutions that align with national stunting reduction objectives.
- Leveraging local manufacturing capacity to ensure scalable, cost-effective delivery.

Through a collaborative framework — Raise a Life. Raise a Nation. — we believe the private sector, government departments including the Department of Social Development, and specialised nutrition partners can work in concert to accelerate progress towards the 2030 target.

Ending child stunting by 2030 is an ambitious goal. Achieving it will require sustained partnership, disciplined resource allocation and targeted technical expertise.

Strengthening what already exists

South Africa has taken an important step by placing child stunting firmly on the national agenda. The strategic pivot now required is not a change in direction, but an intensification of focus.

If we treat the first 1,000 days as a central pillar of economic policy — alongside education reform, industrial growth and fiscal consolidation — we can unlock compounding returns that last decades.

For Treasury, this means safeguarding the productivity of future generations.

For corporates, it means aligning investment with measurable, nation-building outcomes.

For communities, it means children who are able not only to attend school, but to thrive there.

Ending child stunting by 2030 is an ambitious goal. Achieving it will require sustained partnership, disciplined resource allocation and targeted technical expertise.

The foundations of a stronger South Africa are already being laid. By working together to strengthen investment in the first 1,000 days, we can ensure those foundations are built to last.

Author
Jenny Martin, Managing Director, Compact Food Solutions SA

Starting fryers too early, running during extended downtime, or using heaters that create excessive oil-film temperatures all contribute to premature breakdown.

Five costly mistakes that shorten frying oil life

In food processing operations that rely heavily on industrial frying, cooking oil is often viewed as a consumable cost. Increasingly, however, processors are recognising oil management as something more strategic. How oil is selected, handled, and protected throughout the frying process has a direct impact on waste generation, energy use, cleaning requirements. Extending oil life goes beyond cost reduction. It is a practical sustainability strategy that supports operational efficiency, product consistency, and more efficient use of oil, energy, and cleaning resources.

Here are five factors that shorten frying oil life — and how to address them.

1. Operating your fryer consistently below intended throughput

Fryer sizing should align with heat load, production capacity, and output requirements, but oil life is also influenced by how consistently a fryer operates at its intended throughput. Periods of low utilisation — often caused by raw product supply interruptions, unplanned downtime, or limitations of packaging capacity — can extend oil residence time and increase exposure to heat and air. Paying attention to upstream and downstream constraints helps maintain oil quality, extend oil life, and optimise overall throughput.

2. Excessive exposure to air
Oxidation is one of the primary drivers of frying oil degradation, and it is heavily influenced by oxygen exposure. Open fryer designs, lifted hoods, and uncontrolled airflow allow air to interact with hot oil, rapidly reducing stability. Modified atmosphere techniques — such as steam blanketing and internal baffles — help protect oil by minimising oxygen contact.

In practice, operating conditions can have just as much impact on oil quality as equipment design. In one batch frying application, a customer contacted us after experiencing significantly shorter oil life. On investigation, we found the hood steam extraction system was set incorrectly, pulling large amounts of air in through the fryer hood over the oil. With the correct adjustments, we were able to extend the oil life by several days.

3. Poor filtration and fines management
Particulate matter, or "fines," left in frying oil will burn and carbonise. Burnt fines are one of the most aggressive contributors to oil breakdown. Effective filtration systems remove debris before it compromises oil quality, while absorbent media can help remove free fatty acids and rejuvenate oil condition.

4. Inadequate storage and handling practices
Oil degradation often begins before frying even starts. Aeration during delivery or transfer introduces oxygen, while incompatible materials such as copper or brass catalyse chemical reactions that rapidly degrade oil. Sealed storage tanks, inert gas blanketing, and proper material selection help preserve oil quality and reduce unnecessary waste.

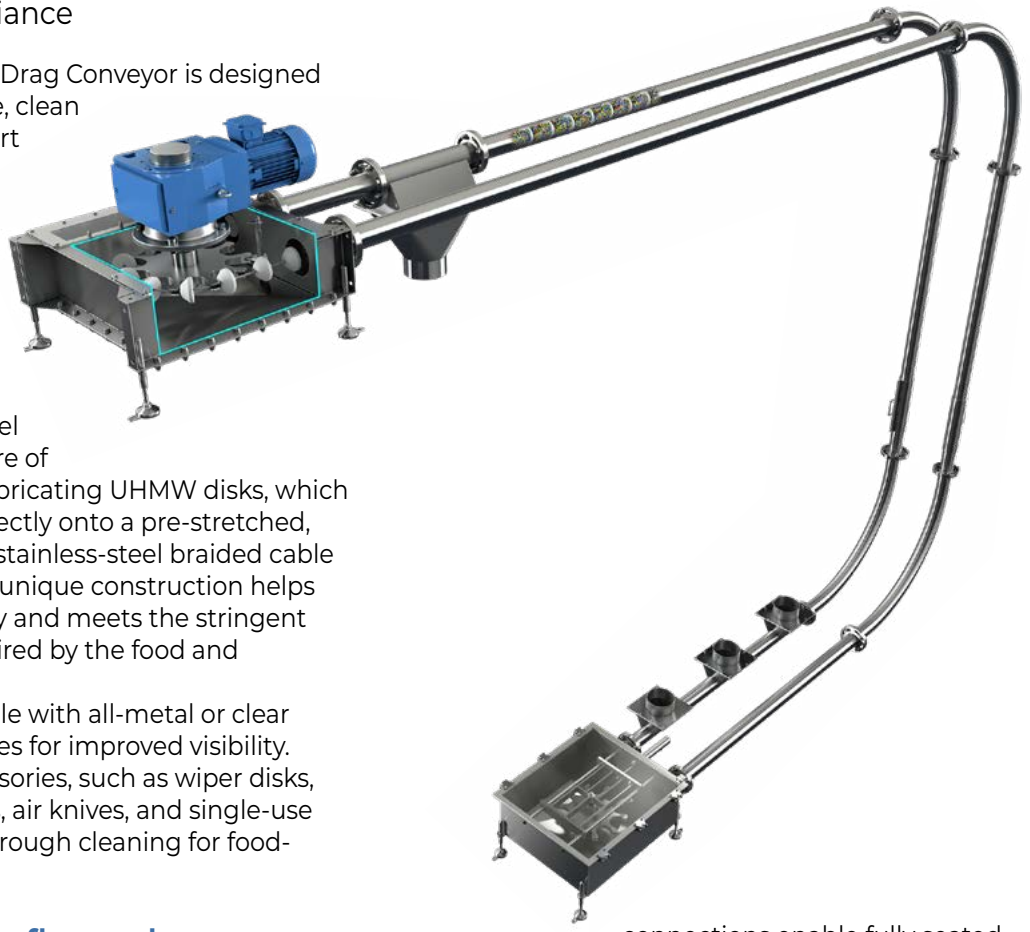
5. Uncontrolled heating and idle time
Heating oil without cooking product accelerates degradation without delivering value. Starting fryers too early, running during extended downtime, or using heaters that create excessive oil-film temperatures all contribute to premature breakdown. Heating systems should be designed to meet process demands efficiently while minimising thermal stress on the oil.

Why these mistakes matter
Each of these issues increases oil disposal rates, energy consumption, and cleaning requirements — all of which negatively impact sustainability performance. By choosing the right fryer design, oil handling, and daily operating practices, you can significantly extend oil life while reducing waste and resource use.

Turning oil management into a sustainability advantage
When approached systematically, oil management becomes a practical way to reduce waste and resource use. When the right equipment design is selected and supported by good day-to-day operating practices, extended oil life can lower resource demand while maintaining consistent product quality. By treating oil as a valuable process asset — and choosing the right fryer to protect it — you can improve efficiency, consistency, and sustainability across your frying operations.

Hapman highlights CablePro™ Tubular Drag Conveyor

Hapman with the most demanding food industry standards has launched **CablePro™ Tubular Drag Conveyor**. This advanced conveyor combines gentle handling, efficiency, and compliance



The CablePro Tubular Drag Conveyor is designed specifically for gentle, clean and efficient transport of products, such as cereals, grains, nuts, frozen foods, pet food, and other delicate items. The CablePro™ system features FDA-compliant components, including food-grade coatings and stainless-steel tubing. Another key feature of the CablePro is the self-lubricating UHMW disks, which are injection-moulded directly onto a pre-stretched, food-grade oil-lubricated stainless-steel braided cable with a nylon coating. This unique construction helps maintain product integrity and meets the stringent sanitation standards required by the food and beverage industry.

The CablePro is available with all-metal or clear sight glass inspection tubes for improved visibility. Integrated cleaning accessories, such as wiper disks, scraper disks, brush boxes, air knives, and single-use sponge disks, support thorough cleaning for food-handling safety.

"...optional sanitary flanged connections enable fully seated tube ends which guarantees a tight gap fit, helping prevent product harbourage and contamination"

CablePro incorporates an auto-tensioner as standard, to maintain the optimal cable tension, extending the cable and disc life while reducing maintenance. Its sealed design with integral drains also supports Clean-In-Place (CIP) protocols, allowing for easier and faster cleaning through various cleaning options, such as mechanical scrapers, fluid rinse and foam cleaners.

To further streamline installation, the tubing is engineered and cut to application length, sanitary flanged, and match-marked, enabling labour-saving and fast assembly. The optional sanitary flanged connections enable fully seated tube ends which guarantees a tight gap fit, helping prevent product harbourage and contamination. For increased flexibility, standard tube lengths may be field-cut and joined with compression couplers for easy on-site customisation. The CablePr system also offers integrated floor and ceiling mount options for enhanced installation stability.

The CablePro can be seamlessly integrated with other Hapman products and systems, including Bulk Bag Unloaders, Bulk Bag fillers, PosiPortion feeders for precise product delivery, and SolidQuid liquid-solid mixing systems. This flexibility enables manufacturers to optimise their processes and achieve higher productivity while maintaining quality.

The CablePro Tubular Drag Conveyor reflects Hapman's dedication to developing practical and customer-focused material handling solutions.

www.hapman.com

KHS will be presenting its pioneering system at interpack in Düsseldorf, Germany, from May 7 to 13 in Hall 13, Booth A31

Discover a clear benefit for aseptics

KHS presents the result of an extensive development study: with the KHS SUPREME PET bottle, the Dortmund turnkey supplier is focusing on the product protection of oxygen-sensitive beverages such as tea.

Here, KHS makes use of its tried-and-tested Plasmax barrier technology, a wafer-thin, transparent layer of silicon oxide that coats the inside wall of PET bottles like glass. Less than 100 nanometres thick, it reliably protects the sensitive bottle content from oxidation, retaining its taste, colour and quality for lengthy periods of time. This helps to make the product last up to ten times longer.

Plasmax technology, that KHS has been successfully using for over 20 years, is being continuously further developed at its Hamburg factory. This site is KHS' competence centre for PET, with the team's pooled expertise directly incorporated into every single innovation to support customers worldwide with the development of pioneering packaging systems.

Protection for quality-sensitive beverages

"Our barrier system is ideal for premium products such as green tea that's extremely quality-sensitive and has to satisfy the highest requirements on markets such as Asia," explains Philipp Langhammer, product manager for barrier technology at KHS. Tea oxidises easily, leading to unwanted changes in colour and taste. The glass barrier prevents this, making for long shelf lives, freshness and safety.

This technology, originally developed for pharmaceutical glass containers, is based on many years of research and process optimisation. The first Plasmax systems were piloted in the food sector back in the early 2000s. Since then, KHS has further developed its Plasmax barrier and this year scaled it up to industrial production speeds of up to 60,000 bottles per hour – without any detriment to its protective properties.

Technology meets sustainability

Besides its technical precision, the barrier is also convincing with respect to its environmental friendliness. One major advantage of Plasmax technology is that it is completely recyclable: the glass coating is removed by caustic during the recycling process without affecting the quality of the material. Unlike chemical scavenger technologies that make recycling more difficult, here, the purity of the separated PET is maintained. The coating is also fully compatible with 100% [r]PET: this means that it can be recycled and applied to recycled PET containers. "We thus refer to this as a fully circular barrier technology," says Langhammer. "Our style of packaging combines all the benefits: top barrier performance and full recyclability."

www.khs.com

Ishida Europe to showcase latest innovations that address food manufacturing challenges at Interpack 2026

In May 2026 Ishida will be returning to Interpack, the leading global packaging trade show, to showcase innovations that support food manufacturers in their quest for efficient, safe and sustainable food production.

Interpack will take place from 7–13 May 2026 at the Messe Düsseldorf Exhibition Center in Germany. On stand 14/A40 in Hall 14, Ishida will be demonstrating its latest solutions, including the market leading CCW-AS multihead weigher range, the recently introduced IX-PD photon counting dual energy X-Ray inspection system, the recently acquired Robot Grader, and the QX 800 tray sealer, designed for high-capacity food production.

Interpack 2026 will see Ishida's stand divided into four product areas, which are multihead weighing, quality control, fresh food (including protein) and snacks packing, these four areas are showcasing a total of more than 30 solutions. Each zone will have dedicated experts on hand to address and solve food manufacturers' unique challenges.

A notable highlight of Ishida's exhibition is its fresh food zone where the company is demonstrating its tray sealer range, including the recently launched QX-800 model for high-volume production lines. The QX-800 offers perfectly sealed trays in a compact, energy efficient designs that allows tool changes in under five minutes. Importantly, Ishida's QX-800 is capable of handling skinpack applications, an increasingly popular method of sealing fresh meat and fish as more manufacturers look towards sustainable packaging solutions and to reduce packaging materials.

Alongside the four dedicated areas, Ishida will reveal how its smart solutions move manufacturers toward Industry 5.0 principles by adopting its remote monitoring and production software, Sentinel 5.0. This system includes functions that help with connectivity, traceability, remote diagnostics and paperless proof of compliance, all of which are rising challenges in the food manufacturing sector.

Steve Jones, Marketing Director of Ishida Europe, said: "We are thrilled to be returning to Interpack. It is always brilliant to come together as an industry and engage with our customers. Every three years, Interpack provides a unique opportunity to exchange information, understand challenges, learn, showcase solutions and introduce innovations, and Ishida are always here to lead the way!"

www.ishidaeurope.com/en/

NSF and Circle H announce strategic collaboration to enable Global Certification access

Strategic collaboration creates streamlined pathways for halal, organic and specialty certifications as the growing halal market drives demand

NSF, a leading global organisation dedicated to protecting human health, and Circle H International, a globally recognised halal certification body, have announced a strategic collaboration program designed to simplify certification access for food companies locally and worldwide.

The collaboration establishes direct referral pathways between the organisations to help serve the global halal food and beverage market, which is projected to grow from an estimated $2.1 trillion in 2021 to $3.27 trillion by 2028 (Fortune Business Insights). The current North American halal addressable market alone is estimated at $100 billion.

NSF clients seeking halal certification will receive direct referrals to Circle H, whereas Circle H clients interested in NSF's comprehensive portfolio, including vegan, non-GMO, organic and food safety certifications, will connect with NSF specialists.

"This collaboration between Circle H and NSF is a natural extension of our mission," said Elsayed Zayan, CEO of Circle H International. "By collaborating with NSF on this initiative, we are creating a certification experience that's efficient and deeply aligned with Circle H's healthy, wholesome and ethical lifestyle values. Together, we are also opening wider doors for local and global access to customers and brands seeking significant growth."

The collaboration enables companies to simplify, streamline, and scale, addressing the growing complexity of global food certification as consumer expectations evolve and regulatory demands increase. Both organisations maintain full independence in certification.

The European halal market is expanding at nearly 8% annually, driven by growing Muslim demographics and broader consumer acceptance of halal products. The Asia-Pacific region hosts the largest share of the world's Islamic population, while the fastest-growing markets are the Middle East and Africa, creating significant market opportunities for certified food companies.

"We're excited to collaborate with Circle H to offer our clients a broader spectrum of certification solutions," said Carey Allen, director of food claims at NSF. "This initiative reflects our commitment to making certification more accessible and meaningful for today's food industry and its customers. Together with Circle H, we can better support food companies in achieving multiple certifications efficiently, allowing them to unlock new market opportunities worldwide."

The collaboration aligns with NSF's strategy to expand its global reach and deepen impact on food integrity, dietary wellness and consumer values verification. Circle H's expertise in halal certification complements NSF's portfolio of specialty certifications for international market access.

www.nsf.com

Is your warehouse smart, sustainable and skills-powered?

For decades, warehouses across much of Africa have been viewed primarily as functional cost centres - simply places to store stock, often under-invested and invisible to boardroom strategy. That mindset is changing globally, and supply chain industry body SAPICS says that African businesses risk falling behind if they fail to recognise that warehouses today are strategic investments that enable growth, resilience and competitiveness.

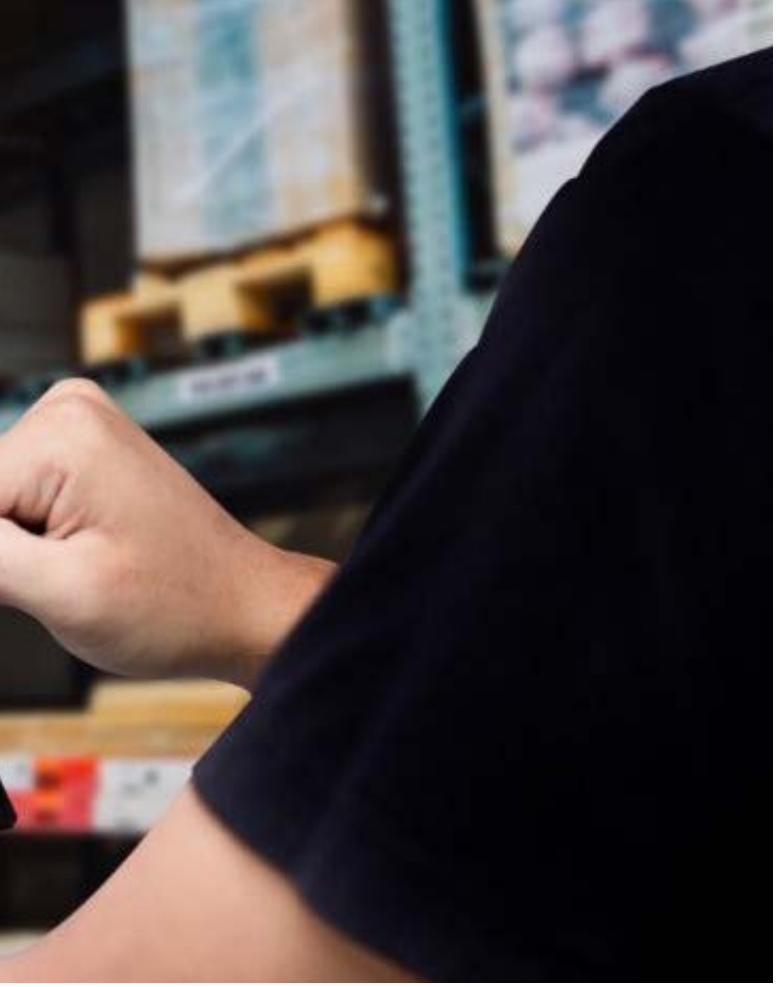
As geopolitical tensions, nearshoring and shifting trade dynamics push global companies to diversify sourcing and manufacturing, Africa has an opportunity to position itself as a viable regional and global hub. However, this opportunity will only be realised with investments in ports and transport corridors, as well as in modern, efficient, sustainable skills-powered warehousing.

Warehousing has evolved from a passive function to a critical enabler of supply chain performance. Decisions about warehouse location, capacity and technology now shape distribution networks, determine speed to market and influence flexibility and resilience in the face of disruption. In a world of just-in-time and increasingly hybrid resilience-focused logistics models, omnichannel retail and complex cross-border supply chains, the warehouse has become a strategic lever. Warehouse sustainability is critically important in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks, as it directly impacts carbon footprints, operational costs and corporate reputation.

According to SAPICS, warehouses that do not function optimally can undermine the entire supply chain. Effective warehouse management ensures the availability of the right goods, in the right quantity, at the right time; the safe and secure storage of products; and their delivery in perfect condition. When warehouses underperform, customer satisfaction, cash flow and business reputation are all at risk.

This pressure is intensifying as consumer expectations rise. Customers increasingly demand customised products, full product transparency and ever-faster delivery. These demands expose inefficiencies in warehouse layout, processes, systems and skills - inefficiencies that many African operations still struggle to overcome.

Market data underscores the growing importance of warehousing. Knight Frank's Africa Industrial



"In a world of just-in-time and increasingly hybrid resilience-focused logistics models, omnichannel retail and complex cross-border supply chains, the warehouse has become a strategic lever"

Market Dashboard shows that in key markets such as Johannesburg, Nairobi and Lagos, occupancy rates for modern warehouses have climbed to around 85%, up from 78% in the first half of 2023. Prime warehouse rentals in Johannesburg have risen by 7% over the same period, this report found. This signals strong demand, but also highlights supply constraints in quality, fit-for-purpose facilities.

The strategic importance of warehousing is also reflected globally. In the DP World Global Trade Observatory Annual Outlook Report 2026, logistics executives ranked "warehousing and logistics hubs" as the operational area in which infrastructure investment is needed most. This reinforces the view that warehouses are no longer peripheral infrastructure, but central to trade competitiveness.

One of the most underestimated pressures on warehouses is reverse logistics. With the rapid growth of e-commerce across Africa, return volumes are rising sharply. Globally, up to 40% of goods bought online in some categories are returned, compared with just 5% to 10% for in-store purchases. SAPICS notes that these higher return rates can require up to 20% more warehouse space and labour to handle inspections, repackaging, refurbishment or disposal.

For African warehouses that were not designed with reverse flows in mind, this creates congestion, higher costs and operational complexity. Smart warehouse design, flexible layouts and digital tracking systems are increasingly essential to manage both forward and reverse flows efficiently.

Technology alone will not close Africa's warehousing gap. SAPICS emphasises that skilled people are critical to unlocking value from investments in automation, AI-enabled warehouse management systems and data analytics. Today's warehouse managers require a blend of operational expertise, digital literacy, problem-solving skills and an understanding of sustainability.

To address this skills gap, SAPICS offers targeted education for warehouse employees, supervisors and managers. Its flagship Basic Stores & Stock Control (BSSC) course is widely regarded as a foundation for sound warehouse management, equipping learners with practical knowledge that improves efficiency, accuracy and control on the warehouse floor.

When it comes to supply chain sustainability, SAPICS advises that the warehouse is an important, impactful place to make changes. "The drive for greener, sustainable supply chains often puts the spotlight on factors like raw materials and transport, but reducing the energy used in factories and warehouses may be more easily achievable and will have a substantial impact on an organisation's carbon emissions.

"Supply chain sustainability leaders are increasingly citing the energy used in their facilities as one of the best levers supply chains have to reduce their emissions. While material and product use are significant contributors, supply chains usually have more control over the decisions concerning energy sourcing for their facilities."

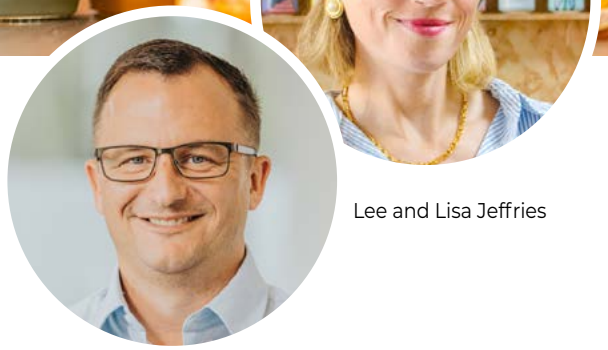
In South Africa and regions facing energy constraints and rising electricity costs, these investments are not just environmentally responsible, but essential.

Recognising the imperative to drive sustainability in supply chains, SAPICS's education offerings also include a masterclass in the best practices and solutions to build a sustainable supply chain – provided in partnership with United States-based international supply chain management body ASCM (The Association for Supply Chain Management) – as well as ISCEA's (the International Supply Chain Education Alliance's) Certified Sustainable Supply Chain Professional programme.

Warehousing in Africa is at a crossroads, SAPICS asserts. Rising demand, changing trade patterns and evolving consumer expectations present challenges and opportunities. "Warehouses that remain under-invested risk becoming bottlenecks that limit growth. Those that are smart, sustainable and skills-powered can become powerful catalysts for economic growth, business success and job creation."

www.sapics.org

Prism eLogistics moves like jAGA to hit major growth target



Lee and Lisa Jeffries

Prism eLogistics is leveraging its international fulfilment network to help jAGA, home of the world's most powerful nootropic drinks, go global.

Launched three years ago, jAGA represents the cutting edge of the booming wellness and functional drinks industry, with projected turnover set to double next year as the brand aims to surpass a million pounds' worth of orders.

While founding husband and wife team Lee and Lisa Jeffries initially handled every element of the business themselves, when they began to regularly receive orders worth tens of thousands per month, they realised they needed support. Lee explained: "Lisa was working all hours picking and packing orders, overseeing logistics and problem solving where necessary, and it left her with almost no time to build the brand. But we like being a small team, we're agile and cost-effective, so bringing someone in full time wasn't an option. That's when we realised outsourcing was the best option for us"

Having previously worked with managing director Ian Wright, Prism eLogistics immediately came to mind. With packing, sleeving, storage and fulfilment services available, Prism was able to offer end-to-end fulfilment support and the added value jAGA needed.

"Partnering with Prism immediately took the stress out of our business," said Lisa. "From order to delivery, it feels like we're in safe hands, and thanks to Prism's digital dashboard, I have total visibility. Beyond the day-to-day, Prism is almost like jAGA's a big brother – whatever the challenge, we know the team will provide advice, a solution or a contact to keep our business moving. Nothing we've asked has ever been too much."

In terms of crisis resolution, Prism recently saved the day when third party providers fell short for a crucial brand launch planned with a luxury outlet. With a delivery being lost, the team at jAGA was faced with letting down the major retailer which it had worked hard to build a relationship with. On receiving the call Prism loaded a van, drove into central London and delivered the product the same day, well in time for the launch.

With global expansion the next step for jAGA, Prism is ready to turbocharge the brand's international growth. Ian Wright, managing director for Prism, commented: "It's been fantastic to witness and facilitate the growth of one of the most exciting nootropic drinks brands on the market. The next step for jAGA is to penetrate global markets, and our international partners are perfectly placed to help them achieve that. From sleeving cans for different regions to small batch runs which enable product testing before full-scale launch, plus digital visibility of international fulfilment, we have all the ingredients jAGA needs to take over the world."

For Lee and Lisa, their growth to date and their future expansion is strongly linked to their relationship with Prism eLogistics. Lee concluded: "For up-and-coming brands, especially in the current economic climate, the pressure to get everything right can feel overwhelming. Outsourcing to a business like Prism, which not only offers specialist support, but a genuine 'anything is possible' attitude is invaluable. We can't wait to see what the coming years bring – but whatever happens, we know Prism will be part of the jAGA story."

www.prismlogistics.com

Africa Food Show 2026 returns amid Africa's expanding $1 trillion food and beverage market

Africa's food and beverage sector is entering a defining growth phase. Valued at approximately $346 billion in 2024, the continent's F&B market is projected to reach approximately $567 billion (R9 trillion) by 2032, with longer-term projections placing the broader opportunity at nearly $1 trillion (R16 trillion) by 2030 [1].

Driven by rapid urbanisation, population expansion, retail modernisation and shifting consumer demand, Africa's food economy is evolving at pace. Rising incomes, a growing middle class and
a young, globally connected consumer base are reshaping purchasing habits and accelerating demand for premium, health-focused, convenience and value-added products.

At the same time, structural pressures remain significant. Hunger is rising in Africa, where more than one in five people are affected. If current trends continue, as many as 512 million people could face hunger by 2030, nearly 60 percent of them in Africa.[2] These realities highlight the urgency of innovation in food processing, pricing, logistics and distribution.

Against this context of both opportunity and structural pressure, Africa Food Show 2026 returns to the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) from the 10th – 12th of June 2026, strategically positioned as Africa's leading food and beverage sourcing platform where growth meets solutions.

The three-day exhibition connects retail-ready food and beverage suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and technology providers with senior buyers, wholesalers, importers, exporters, hospitality groups and procurement leaders from across Africa and beyond.

By bringing together more than 350 local and international exhibitors and over 8,000 industry professionals from 60+ countries, the show provides a structured platform for sourcing, deal-making, partnership development and expansion into African markets.

"Africa's F&B sector is brimming with opportunity amid rapid urbanisation, retail transformation and growing consumer demand," says Margaret Peters, Event Director at dmg events. "But sustained growth depends on stronger connections across the value chain. Africa Food Show 2026 is where suppliers, buyers and industry leaders come together to unlock new partnerships, strengthen route-to-market strategies and drive measurable business growth."

Following a 21-year legacy as Africa's Big 7, the event was rebranded in 2025 as Africa Food Show, marking a strategic evolution aligned with the changing needs of the market. The inaugural edition under its new identity welcomed nearly 350 global exhibitors and more than 9,000 industry professionals from over 60 countries.

The 2026 edition will once again be co-located with Hotel & Hospitality Expo Africa, reflecting the structural link between hospitality growth and food procurement. Africa's hotel development pipeline currently stands at 577 hotels and resorts totalling more than 104,000

rooms, up 13.3% year-on-year[3], signalling sustained demand for foodservice, ingredients, beverage innovation and operational supply solutions across the continent.

The 2026 edition is supported by leading industry partners Synercore, Cape Food Ingredients and Crown Food Group.

"As Platinum Sponsors of Africa Food Show, we see first-hand how critical this platform is for connecting manufacturers with serious buyers across Africa," says Alex Zabbia, Executive-Dairy, Synercore. "The show creates real commercial momentum - from new product development to distribution partnerships - and reflects the collaborative growth mindset needed to strengthen Africa's food ecosystem."

Africa Food Show 2026 combines structured networking with high-impact content designed to attract qualified buyers and elevate industry dialogue.

Headline features will include: Africa Culinary Cup 2026, hosted in partnership with the South African Chefs Association, bringing junior culinary teams from across Africa and the Middle East to compete on an international stage; Game of Chefs, a live culinary innovation competition; National Pizza Challenge and National Burger Challenge, showcasing craftsmanship and product innovation; and on-floor workshops focused on innovation, sustainability, food safety and growth strategy.

As African governments and private sector leaders focus on strengthening local value addition, improving supply chain resilience, and expanding intra-African trade, platforms that facilitate credible business connections are becoming increasingly important.

Africa Food Show 2026 serves as that marketplace - a place where manufacturers establish distribution partnerships, brands enter new territories, retailers discover innovation and suppliers secure long-term buyers.

Registration will open on 18 March 2026 for industry professionals looking to source new products, explore partnerships and gain insight into Africa's evolving food economy.

www.theafricafoodshow.com

Reference
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2. https://data.unicef.org/resources/sofi-2025/
3. https://w-hospitalitygroup.com/hotel-chain-development-pipelines-in-africa-2025/

Packaging REPORTER

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Majority state in Packaging World


Melanie Pillay

RMB Corvest and Alito Fund 2 have acquired a majority stake in Packaging World, a South African manufacturer of flexible plastic packaging for the FMCG food sector. The transaction positions the business for expansion across local and sub-Saharan markets while strengthening its role in the food and beverage packaging value chain.

Founded in 1995 and headquartered in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, Packaging World supplies reels, bags and pouches to food producers requiring reliable flexible packaging solutions. The company's offering aligns with rising demand for sustainable flexible packaging in South Africa, FMCG packaging solutions, and recyclable plastic packaging for food manufacturers.

RMB Corvest and Alito Fund 2 will partner with founder Dean Gianni, who remains operationally involved and retains a stake. Management participation ensures continuity and supports execution in a competitive South African food packaging market.

The investment reflects key sector drivers, including localisation of supply chains, regulatory pressure for sustainability, and increased demand for innovative packaging solutions for FMCG brands. The partners aim to expand Packaging World's reach among large corporate customers while advancing development of recyclable materials and efficient production processes.

Alito, a 51% black women-owned fund, reinforces transformation objectives within the manufacturing sector, supporting inclusive growth and BEE-aligned investment in South Africa's real economy.

Packaging World's integrated model, covering design, development and production, enables scalability and responsiveness to evolving food and beverage packaging requirements.

"Packaging World has delivered strong performance, and has benefited from consistent market share gains, long-standing customer relationships, and continued investment in their manufacturing capabilities, which together with the strong management team, made the business very attractive to us as investors", states Melanie Pillay, executive at RMB Corvest.

Ultra-high barrier paper

Mondi, a global packaging and paper group, has partnered with Prymat to introduce ultra-high barrier paper packaging for dried seasonings, supporting circular economy objectives and advancing recyclable food packaging solutions for the global and South African food and beverage sector.

The collaboration centres on Mondi's re/cycle FunctionalBarrier Paper Ultimate, a paper-based alternative to non-recyclable multi-layer plastic and aluminium packaging. Developed following extensive product trials, the solution addresses key industry requirements for recyclable spice packaging, high barrier paper packaging for food, and sustainable seasoning packaging solutions.

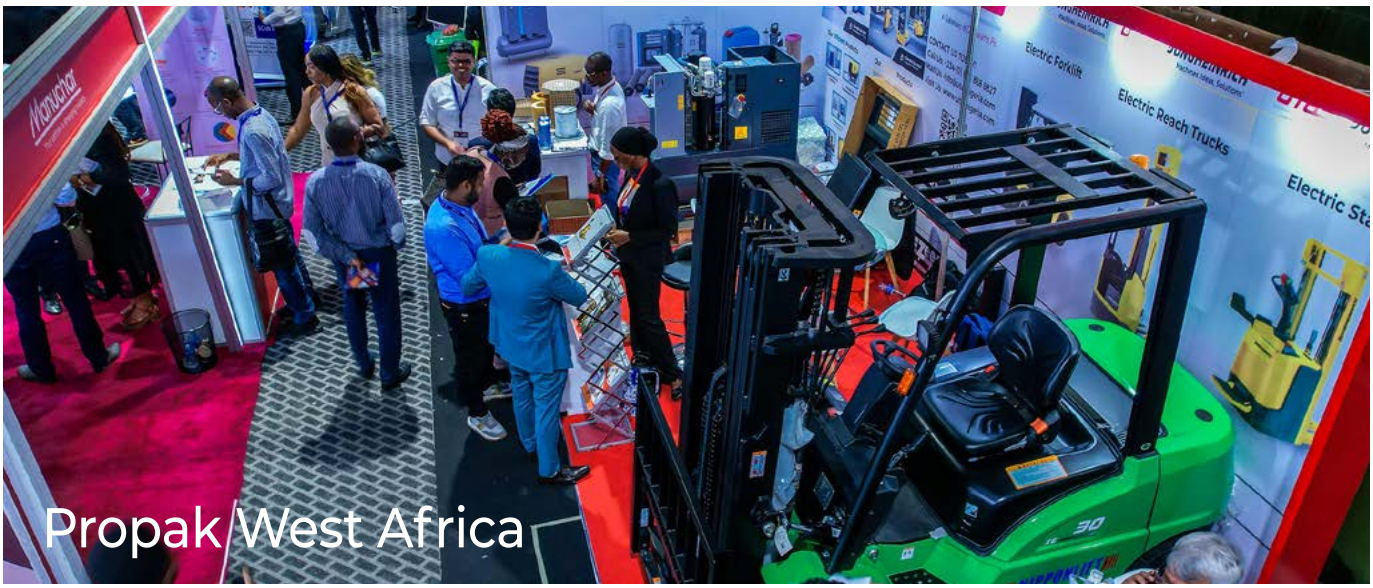
Containing at least 80% paper, the material incorporates a functional barrier coating optimised for recycling and is validated under CEPI recyclability test standards. According to Mondi's internal product impact assessment, it delivers a lower carbon footprint compared with conventional multi-layer formats—an important consideration for manufacturers seeking low CO2 packaging alternatives and compliance with evolving environmental regulations.

Performance metrics remain central. The packaging achieves an oxygen transmission rate below 0.5 cm^3/m^2d and a water vapour transmission rate below 0.5 g/m^2d, ensuring extended shelf life for spices, while maintaining aroma, freshness and product integrity. Its structural stiffness enables effective resealing through dead-fold functionality, supporting consumer usability.

The solution integrates with existing filling lines, eliminating capital expenditure on new machinery—an advantage for producers prioritising cost-efficient sustainable packaging transitions.

Adrian Goralski of Mondi notes the importance of tailored packaging design, while Prymat highlights the technical achievement of meeting high barrier requirements with recyclable materials.

www.mondigroup.com



Propak West Africa

Innovation, automation and sustainability are set to define the next phase of industrial growth in West Africa, with Nigeria at the centre of this shift. As one of the continent's largest economies, Nigeria's expanding consumer base continues to drive demand across food and beverage manufacturing, packaging, personal care and pharmaceuticals. This demand is accelerating the need for advanced food processing technology in West Africa, sustainable packaging solutions Nigeria, and automation in food and beverage manufacturing Africa.

Despite increasing domestic production, Nigeria remains reliant on imported packaging and processing equipment, creating opportunities for local manufacturing development in Africa and technology transfer. At the same time, businesses must navigate supply chain disruption, currency volatility and regulatory change, placing emphasis on efficient, cost-effective industrial machinery investment.

In this context, Propak West Africa will take place at the Landmark Centre in Lagos from 8–10 September 2026. The exhibition provides a platform for stakeholders to assess food processing machinery, packaging automation systems, and labelling and print technologies in Africa.

More than 250 exhibitors will showcase developments in smart packaging technology, energy-efficient manufacturing equipment, and sustainable materials for food packaging. Solutions addressing traceability, waste reduction and regulatory compliance will be central, particularly for food and beverage processors seeking scalable operations.

The co-located conference will address food industry regulations in Nigeria, automation adoption and regional trade, offering strategic insight for decision-makers.

As industrialisation advances, platforms that integrate technology, expertise and collaboration will support long-term competitiveness.

www.propakwestafrica.com

Turning bottlenecks into profits

Packaging line inefficiencies remain a persistent constraint for beverage and food manufacturers across southern Africa, where unplanned downtime and component wear directly affect throughput and margins. A low-cost, engineered solution from igus is addressing this challenge by targeting a common but often overlooked process: container reorientation.

The igus 3D-printed product turner is designed for high-speed packaging lines, enabling the controlled reorientation of cans and PET containers for downstream processing. In continuous production environments, friction and mechanical stress accelerate wear on conventional components, increasing maintenance cycles and disrupting operations. This solution is manufactured using iglidur i150 Tribo-Filament, a tribologically optimised polymer engineered for wear resistance in conveyor systems.

Abrasion resistance

According to Juan-Eric Davidtz of igus, the material offers enhanced abrasion resistance and mechanical strength compared to standard 3D printing polymers such as PLA or ABS. Integrated solid lubricants allow for dry-running operation in food-grade packaging applications, eliminating the need for external lubrication while extending service life. This results in improved dimensional stability, fewer part replacements, and reduced maintenance intervention.

For food and beverage manufacturers in South Africa, compliance remains critical. The iglidur i150 material meets EU Regulation 10/2011 food contact requirements when specified correctly, supporting its use in regulated production environments.

On-demand

The ability to produce these components through on-demand industrial 3D printing introduces additional operational advantages. Packaging engineers can rapidly prototype, test, and deploy production-grade parts tailored to specific line requirements. This flexibility supports faster optimisation cycles and reduces reliance on imported spares.

igus also provides an integrated 3D printing service capable of producing a wide range of maintenance-free polymer components, including bearings, gears, and rollers. For manufacturers focused on reducing downtime in beverage production and improving overall equipment effectiveness, such solutions present a measurable route to increased productivity.

www.igus.co.za

Barcode's next chapter

The shift from traditional 1D barcodes to advanced 2D coding systems is accelerating across the global food and beverage sector. For South African manufacturers, this transition is not simply a technology upgrade; it is a strategic requirement driven by regulatory change, export market expectations, and the need for supply chain transparency. The adoption of GS1 2D codes is set to redefine food and beverage packaging, traceability, and production efficiency.

A key driver behind this shift is the introduction of the European Union's Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), which will mandate Digital Product Passports (DPPs) from 2030. These passports will store structured data on product composition, origin, and environmental impact. At the core of this system are GS1 2D codes, including GS1 DataMatrix and QR codes powered by GS1 Digital Link. These codes act as a bridge between physical packaging and digital product data, enabling real-time access for regulators, retailers, and consumers.

Global standards

For South African food and beverage exporters, compliance with these emerging global standards is becoming critical. Implementing GS1 2D barcodes for food packaging ensures readiness for international market access while improving traceability and recall management within domestic supply chains. Businesses that delay adoption risk operational disruption and reduced competitiveness in export-driven categories.

One of the main operational challenges in implementing 2D barcodes in food production lies in managing complex data requirements at high production speeds. Encoding product identifiers, batch numbers, and expiry dates into a single symbol can increase print complexity and slow down throughput. To address this, manufacturers are increasingly adopting a split coding strategy.

Split coding

Split coding separates fixed and variable data into two distinct codes. Fixed data, such as the GTIN and GS1 Digital Link, is pre-printed onto packaging as a QR code. Variable data, including batch and date information, is applied during production using a GS1 DataMatrix. Modern scanning systems can merge both datasets seamlessly, ensuring full traceability without compromising production efficiency.

This approach offers measurable benefits. Manufacturers report reduced ink usage, faster print speeds, and lower rejection rates compared to single-code systems. For high-volume beverage and food production lines, these gains translate into improved overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) and reduced operational costs.

Coding technology

Delivering consistent, high-quality variable data printing requires robust coding technology. LEIBINGER has developed continuous inkjet (CIJ) systems designed for high-speed, high-precision environments. Its IQJET platform incorporates automatic nozzle sealing technology, preventing ink drying during stoppages and ensuring consistent code quality without manual intervention. This is particularly relevant for food and beverage manufacturers operating continuous or multi-shift production lines.

In South Africa, access to this technology is supported by Marking Solutions, the exclusive distributor of LEIBINGER systems. The company provides local technical support, installation, and after-sales service, enabling manufacturers to implement GS1 2D barcode systems with minimal disruption.

The transition to 2D barcodes in the food and beverage industry is not a future consideration; it is an immediate operational priority. As regulatory frameworks evolve and retailers demand greater transparency, GS1 2D codes will become standard across packaging formats. South African producers that act early can align with global compliance requirements while improving production performance and supply chain visibility.

www.leibinger-group.com

Sealing sweet success

In high-volume sugar production, packaging performance is directly linked to operational efficiency. For one of South Africa's largest sugar mills, the requirement was clear: implement a reliable bag closing solution capable of handling continuous throughput of 20kg multi-wall paper bags without compromising seal integrity.

Addressing high-volume bagging challenges

Sugar milling environments demand robust and consistent packaging processes. Fine particulate products, combined with high-speed production lines, place pressure on sealing systems to perform without interruption. In this case, inadequate sealing risked product loss, contamination, and increased downtime, factors that directly affect profitability in the South African sugar manufacturing sector.

The mill required a high-speed industrial bag closing machine that could ensure tamper-evident, moisture-resistant seals while maintaining production flow. Following a detailed on-site assessment, Buckle Packaging identified the optimal solution: the Fischbein PBC 6000.

High-performance bag closing technology

The Fischbein PBC 6000 is engineered specifically for multi-wall paper bag sealing in food and beverage applications, including sugar, flour, animal feed, and pet food. Its hot-melt gluing technology delivers a secure, uniform seal suited to demanding industrial environments.

For this installation, the machine provided several operational advantages:

- Seamless integration into existing high-throughput bagging lines
- Consistent, flat seals suitable for transport and storage
- Reduced maintenance requirements in continuous production settings
- Improved product protection through reliable closure integrity

The result was a stable, efficient packaging process aligned with the mill's production targets.

A consultative approach to packaging solutions

Buckle Packaging's role extended beyond equipment supply. The company applies a consultative methodology, evaluating each client's industrial bagging requirements, including material type, bag size, throughput demands, and budget constraints.

The company supports three primary bag closing technologies for food manufacturing:

- Bag sewing systems
- Heat sealing equipment
- Hot-melt gluing solutions

This ensures that each recommendation is application-specific rather than standardised.

Supporting efficiency in the food and beverage sector

This project highlights the importance of selecting the correct bag sealing equipment for sugar packaging. By aligning technology with operational requirements, manufacturers can improve efficiency, reduce waste, and maintain product quality across the supply chain.

For South African producers operating at scale, precision in packaging is not optional, it is a core component of performance.

www.bucklepackaging.com

Thermoformed solutions designed to maximise market opportunities

Amcor is continuing to invest in its thermoforming capabilities to meet strong demand from the ready meals and dairy foods sectors.

According to Euromonitor, the market has a steady growth rate of around 5%, reflecting ongoing consumer requirements for reliable and affordable food packaging solutions. The report says that for many brands thermoformed packaging has become a 'strategic asset', helping them to 'extend shelf life (by up to 50%), cut waste and deliver convenience without compromising sustainability'.

The Amcor thermoformed portfolio has been developed in line with these benefits, offering a range of solutions for a wide variety of products and applications, with features such as recycle-ready designs, extended shelf-life and lightweight constructions, as well as high-quality decoration options to create effective brand identity and on-shelf impact.

"The convenience food sector is very competitive, and the right packaging can play an important role in terms of ensuring product quality, creating a strong brand image and encouraging consumer loyalty," said Katrina Burrett, product line director, containers & reusables, Amcor Global Rigids Packaging Solutions. "Our extensive choice of standard packs, as well as our ability to develop customised solutions, mean we can tailor solutions to meet the precise needs of individual customers."

The Amcor portfolio includes a variety of round cups, pots and multi-component trays, available with inserts and in different heights and shapes to offer a versatile solution for many different applications. For products requiring an extended ambient shelf-life, an EVOH barrier can be incorporated to provide effective protection from oxygen ingress and preserve food freshness.

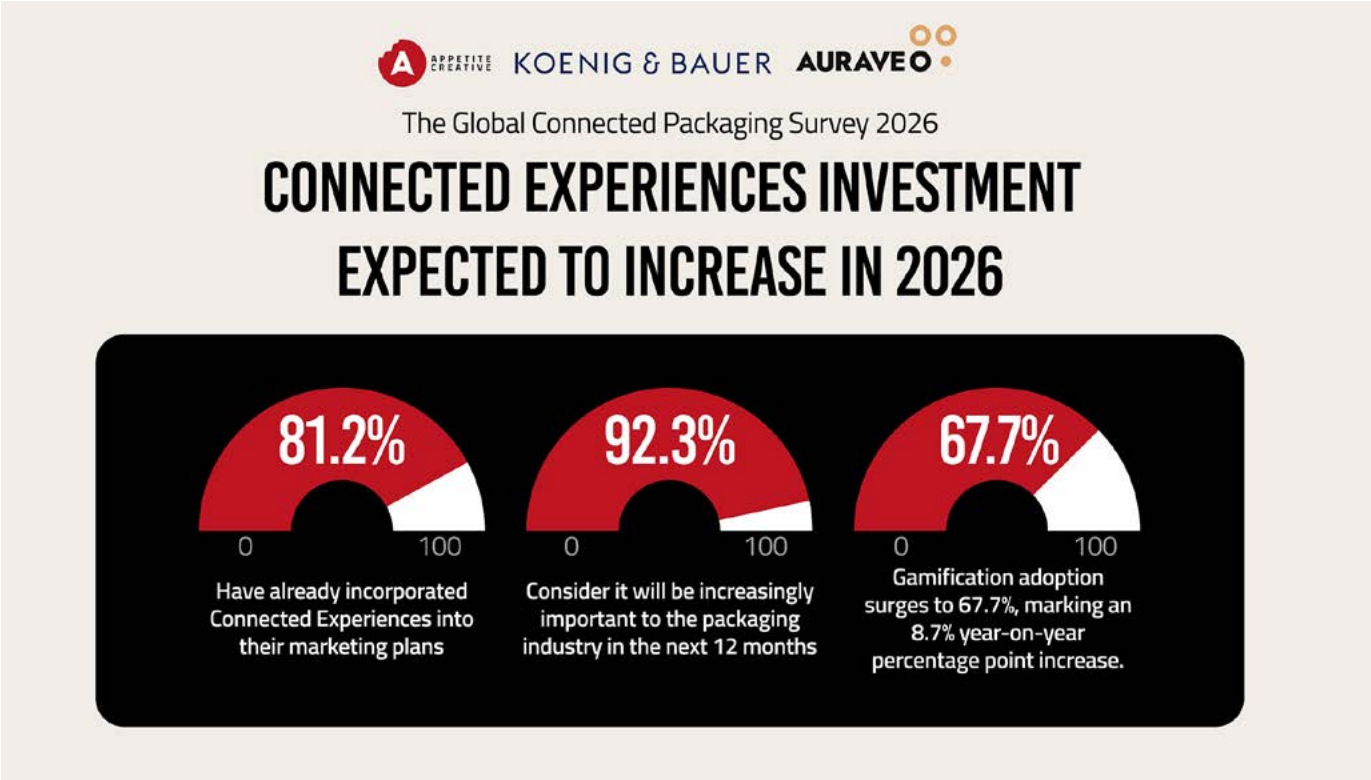
Amcor's technical expertise can create lightweight containers that still deliver excellent long-term performance and durability, while their mono-material construction means they are recycle-ready and can be recycled in countries where the appropriate collection and recycling infrastructure is in place. For extended shelf-life products, the EVOH barrier is accepted in recycling streams.

Premium decoration options include pre-printed lids which use a patented printing process that is able to print over the rim for all-over coverage. Another innovation is thermoformed in-mold labelling for tubs, where pre-printed labels are applied to a container during the thermoforming process. This allows intricate, multi-colored designs to be incorporated to achieve a better level of finish and greater coverage than with direct printing.

"Our latest solutions aim to support customers' sustainability objectives while delivering attractive, functional and brand-enhancing packaging," said Katrina Burrett.

www.amcor.com

Globally connected packaging adoption accelerates



The latest Global Connected Packaging Survey 2026, published by Appetite Creative in partnership with Koenig & Bauer AURAVEO, indicates a decisive shift in how packaging is positioned within the global food and beverage value chain. For South African manufacturers, brand owners and packaging suppliers, the findings point to increased investment, stronger regulatory alignment and measurable gains in consumer engagement.

Industry confidence in connected packaging has reached 92.3%, up from 88.8% in 2025. This growth reflects a transition from pilot initiatives to scaled deployment, with connected packaging technologies now embedded in operational and marketing strategies across multiple sectors.

Trends

Adoption rates have rebounded significantly, with 81.2% of surveyed companies actively using connected packaging solutions, compared to 72.6% in the previous year. For the FMCG and food and beverage sectors, this aligns with growing demand for traceability, compliance and real-time consumer insights.

Key use cases identified in the survey include data collection (60.9%), regulatory compliance such as GS1 standards and digital product passports (60.7%), sustainability initiatives (60.4%), customer loyalty programmes (60.2%) and enhanced consumer engagement (57.8%).

For South African food and beverage businesses, these applications support both export readiness and local compliance requirements, particularly as digital traceability standards continue to evolve.

Shift to multi-technology

The survey highlights a clear movement towards multi-technology deployment. Combined use of QR codes and NFC tags is now the dominant approach at 47.1%, surpassing standalone QR code usage (31.8%) and NFC-only implementations (21.1%).

Interest in serialised QR codes has increased to 73.2%, up from 66.1% in 2025. This reflects demand for more advanced connected packaging strategies

that enable unit-level tracking, anti-counterfeiting measures and supply chain transparency.

At the same time, scepticism is declining. Only 7.7% of respondents consider connected packaging a passing trend, compared to 13.4% last year. This indicates that connected packaging is now regarded as a long-term infrastructure investment rather than a short-term marketing tool.

Digital marketing investment

Investment in digital marketing linked to connected packaging remains strong, with 75.7% of organisations increasing spend in 2026. Campaign adoption has also risen, with 83.3% planning connected packaging campaigns, up from 76.7% in 2025.

Budget allocations show a gradual shift towards higher-value campaigns. More organisations are investing between $31,000 and $80,000, while the proportion of companies spending under $15,000 has declined. This suggests that businesses are moving beyond limited trials towards integrated, large-scale deployments.

For South African brands, this trend signals the importance of aligning packaging strategies with digital marketing and consumer engagement platforms to remain competitive in both domestic and export markets.

Gamification drives consumer engagement

Gamification continues to play a central role in connected packaging campaigns, with 67.7% of respondents incorporating interactive elements. Mobile games (52.1%), quizzes and trivia (48.9%) and augmented reality experiences (42.3%) are the most widely used formats.

The primary objective remains product promotion (47.2%), followed by consumer insight generation (23.4%) and brand awareness (17.7%). For food and beverage companies, this creates a direct channel between packaging and the end consumer, enabling measurable engagement and data-driven decision-making.

Strategic role

Industry leaders emphasise that connected packaging is no longer limited to marketing applications. It is increasingly used to support regulatory compliance, sustainability reporting and supply chain traceability.

This is particularly relevant for South African exporters facing stricter international requirements around digital product passports, ingredient transparency and environmental reporting.

As adoption expands across sectors, including FMCG, manufacturing and packaging, connected packaging is becoming a core component of digital transformation strategies.

Outlook for the South African market

The survey findings indicate that connected packaging is entering a mature phase characterised by scale, integration and measurable return on investment. For South African food and beverage stakeholders, early adoption and strategic implementation will be critical to maintaining competitiveness.

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Circular economy drive: Policy direction and industry implications

At the POLYCO 2026 Strategic Overview in Cape Town, Willie Aucamp, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, set out the government's position on waste management reform and the role of industry in advancing a circular economy in South Africa. For stakeholders across the food and beverage sector, the address reinforced both compliance expectations and emerging opportunities linked to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

Waste management challenges and economic implications

Inefficient waste management in South Africa continues to affect public health, environmental outcomes, and economic productivity. Poor waste collection and disposal systems contribute to pollution, disease transmission, and infrastructure strain, particularly in underserved communities.

For the food and beverage industry, these inefficiencies translate into increased regulatory pressure, reputational risk, and supply chain disruptions. Packaging waste, especially plastics, remains a focal point, with the government prioritising improved collection, recycling rates, and material recovery.

Policy shift towards a circular economy

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) is accelerating the transition from a linear "take-make-dispose" model to a circular economy. This framework promotes:

- Reduced material consumption
- Increased reuse and recycling
- Greater resource efficiency
- Job creation within the recycling value chain

Central to this transition are South Africa's Extended Producer Responsibility regulations, which have been implemented over the past five years. These regulations require producers, including food and beverage manufacturers, to take responsibility for the lifecycle of their packaging.

Role of producer responsibility organisations

Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) are instrumental in enabling compliance with EPR requirements. Among these, POLYCO plays a key role in managing plastic packaging waste streams.

Through its programmes, POLYCO supports:
- Collection and recycling infrastructure development
- Producer compliance across multiple packaging categories
- Innovation in plastic recycling technologies
- Alignment with the National Waste Management Strategy

Further information on POLYCO's initiatives and compliance frameworks is available at **www.polyco.co.za.**

For food and beverage producers, participation in PRO schemes is no longer optional—it is a regulatory requirement with measurable targets.

EPR compliance and performance expectations

The Minister emphasised that while progress has been made, performance against EPR targets remains a primary measure of compliance. Producers are expected to meet or exceed annual targets across all packaging streams.

Key compliance considerations for the food and beverage sector include:
- Accurate reporting of packaging volumes
- Financial contributions to PRO schemes
- Demonstrable improvements in recycling rates
- Adoption of recyclable or reusable packaging formats

Failure to meet these requirements may trigger stricter regulatory interventions.

Deposit refund systems under consideration

A significant policy signal from the draft National Waste Management Strategy 2026 is the potential introduction of Deposit Refund Systems (DRS). These systems may be applied to packaging streams that consistently underperform against EPR targets.

Willie Aucamp

For beverage producers in particular, this has direct implications. Deposit schemes, already implemented in various global markets, can:
- Increase collection rates of bottles and containers
- Shift operational costs
- Require adjustments to distribution and retail systems

The introduction of DRS in South Africa would represent a structural change in how packaging waste is managed, particularly in high-volume beverage categories.

Municipal partnerships and infrastructure development

Colaboration between PROs, municipalities, and industry stakeholders is a central pillar of government strategy. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are being used to formalise partnerships and improve service delivery at the local level.

For the food and beverage sector, this creates opportunities to:
- Support localised recycling initiatives
- Strengthen supply chains for recycled materials
- Improve compliance through integrated waste systems

These partnerships are particularly relevant in regions where municipal waste services are limited.

Inclusion of the informal waste sector

The informal waste sector remains a critical component of South Africa's recycling ecosystem. Waste pickers contribute significantly to collection rates, particularly for recyclable packaging materials.

Government policy increasingly supports:
- Improved working conditions
- Integration into formal value chains
- Access to infrastructure and resources

Continued on page 53

Economic reality check as global recycling regulations tighten

South African food and beverage producers face a tightening regulatory environment as global recycling frameworks move from policy ambition to enforceable compliance, according to Telly Chauke, CEO of Petco. This shift has direct implications for packaging strategy, cost structures and supply chain resilience across the sector.

The transition to binding extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations is accelerating across major markets. For South African manufacturers exporting packaged goods, this introduces new compliance risks and operational requirements. Chauke describes the current phase as an "economic reality check", where packaging decisions are increasingly dictated by international regulatory frameworks rather than voluntary sustainability targets.

Central development

A central development is the European Union's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), which becomes directly applicable on 12 August 2026. The regulation enforces recyclability performance thresholds, minimum recycled content mandates and standardised labelling requirements. For South African food and beverage exporters, this means packaging formats must align with EU recyclability criteria across all markets, not only within Europe.

At the same time, the expansion of EPR legislation in multiple US states and pilot programmes in the Middle East signals a global convergence towards producer-funded recycling systems. These frameworks are reshaping cost allocation in packaging value chains, with producers assuming greater financial and operational responsibility for post-consumer waste.

Locally

Locally, South Africa has made measurable progress in recycling infrastructure. Investments such as Extrupet's Western Cape bottle-to-bottle facility, launched in 2025, demonstrate capacity growth in recycled PET (rPET) processing. However, these gains are being offset by external market pressures.

Global PET pricing dynamics remain a critical concern. Oversupply of recyclable material and reduced demand have pushed bale prices to historic lows, while lower-priced virgin PET continues to undercut recycled alternatives. This pricing imbalance is largely driven by expanded production capacity in Asia, particularly in China, where industrial policy supports high-volume virgin polymer output.

Structural challenge

For South African beverage producers, this creates a structural challenge: meeting recycled content targets while managing input cost volatility. The divergence between virgin and recycled material pricing risks slowing the adoption of circular packaging unless corrective measures are implemented.

Chauke emphasises that enforcement of domestic EPR regulations is now essential to maintaining market stability. Under Section 18 of the National Environmental Management: Waste Act, all producers placing packaging on the market are required to participate in compliance schemes. However, non-compliant operators continue to distort the system by avoiding associated costs.

Strengthening enforcement mechanisms would ensure equitable cost distribution and increase material flows to recycling facilities. Higher collection rates and consistent feedstock supply are necessary to sustain local recyclers and reduce reliance on virgin inputs.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, resilience in South Africa's food and beverage packaging sector will depend on coordinated action across the value chain. Petco has indicated that its 2026 strategy will prioritise collection system expansion through logistics funding and upgrades to buy-back centres, alongside initiatives to improve material quality.

Targeted economic interventions will also be required. These include energy cost relief for recyclers and fiscal incentives to support recycled material usage. Without such measures, the sector risks reduced competitiveness in export markets where compliance with global packaging and recycling regulations is becoming a prerequisite.

For industry stakeholders, the direction is clear: aligning with global EPR frameworks, investing in compliant packaging design and securing stable recycled material supply will be critical to maintaining market access and operational continuity.

Circular economy drive: Policy direction and industry implications

Continued from page 51

For food and beverage companies, engaging with inclusive recycling models is becoming an important aspect of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) compliance.

Consumer behaviour and waste separation

Behavioural change at the consumer level is essential to achieving national waste management targets. Public awareness campaigns and education initiatives aim to improve waste separation at source.

Industry stakeholders are expected to contribute through:

- On-pack recycling information
- Consumer awareness campaigns
- Collaboration with government and PRO-led initiatives

Improved consumer participation directly impacts collection efficiency and recycling outcomes.

Strategic outlook for the food and beverage sector

Te direction set by Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment signals a tightening regulatory environment combined with increased collaboration opportunities.

For South Africa's food and beverage B2B market, the implications are clear:

- EPR compliance will remain a non-negotiable operational requirement
- Investment in sustainable packaging will accelerate
- Data transparency and reporting will become more stringent
- Circular economy principles will influence procurement and design decisions

Companies that align early with these requirements are likely to reduce regulatory risk while positioning themselves competitively in a market that increasingly prioritises sustainability.

The POLYCO 2026 Strategic Overview highlighted the importance of coordinated action between government, industry, and communities in addressing South Africa's waste management challenges. For the food and beverage sector, the transition to a circular economy is both a compliance imperative and a strategic opportunity.

As EPR implementation evolves and new policy instruments such as Deposit Refund Systems are considered, producers must adapt their operations, partnerships, and packaging strategies to meet national objectives and maintain market relevance.

https://petco.co.za/

Glass lightweighting innovation

Glass remains a primary packaging format for the wine sector due to its material properties and recyclability. For wine producers, glass packaging protects product quality while supporting sustainability targets across the supply chain. In the South African wine industry, the development of lightweight glass bottles is increasingly central to cost management, carbon reduction and compliance with international retail standards.

Ardagh Glass Packaging (Ardagh, formerly Consol Glass) has supplied glass bottles to South African wine producers for decades. The company continues to support the sector through manufacturing capability, technical expertise and packaging innovation. A key focus area is lightweighting – the process of reducing the weight of wine bottles without affecting structural strength or performance.

Lightweight wine bottles require less raw material in production, which lowers manufacturing inputs and reduces transport weight across the distribution chain. This contributes to lower carbon emissions and aligns with global sustainability objectives. Increasingly, international retailers and export markets include bottle weight requirements in procurement tenders, driving adoption of lightweight glass packaging for wine.

Glass remains suitable for wine packaging because it is produced from natural raw materials and contains no chemical additives that could affect product integrity. It also offers barrier protection that helps preserve taste, aroma and composition. In addition, glass is 100% recyclable and can be recycled repeatedly in a closed-loop bottle-to-bottle system, supporting a circular economy within the beverage packaging sector.

Ardagh's glass manufacturing operations are aligned with its global sustainability strategy, which prioritises carbon reduction, resource efficiency and increased use of recycled glass cullet. Through in-house engineering and manufacturing expertise, the company continues to expand its lightweight glass bottle portfolio for the South African wine market.

South African wine producers have adopted lightweight glass packaging earlier than many international markets. Most wine bottles supplied by Ardagh to local producers weigh under 420g, compared with an average international retail requirement of around 460g. This positions South African producers well for export markets that increasingly prioritise sustainable wine packaging.

The company currently supplies more than 27 lightweight wine bottle designs and is expanding this range across additional bottle shapes and colours. This development reflects growing demand for lightweight glass bottles in the wine industry as producers adapt to sustainability targets and market requirements.

Ardagh has also invested in its South African production facilities to maintain supply capacity for the wine industry. Strengthening local glass bottle manufacturing supports a domestic value chain that links silica resources, glass production and wine packaging.

www.ardaghgroup.com

Recycling rates are improving

South Africa's plastics industry recorded measurable progress in 2024, with higher recycling volumes and increased use of recycled content across key sectors, including food and beverage packaging. Plastics SA prepared this report to represent the activities of the South African plastics industry during 2024.

According to Plastics SA, the latest verified data show steady progress towards a circular plastics economy, despite ongoing structural and economic constraints in the waste management system.

For stakeholders in the South African food and beverage B2B market, these developments are directly relevant. Packaging remains the largest end-use segment for plastics, and the shift towards recyclate is influencing procurement strategies, compliance requirements and long-term sustainability planning.

Growth in recycled plastics consumption

South Africa's plastics recycling performance improved in 2024, with total recycled volumes reaching 471,000 tonnes. The mechanical recycling rate increased to 28.4%, placing the country above the global average. This positions South Africa as a leading recycling economy within Sub-Saharan Africa.

A key trend is the accelerated growth in recyclate use compared to virgin polymers. Over the past decade, virgin plastics consumption increased by 18%, while recycled plastics consumption grew by 67%. This reflects structural changes in manufacturing and packaging, particularly in sectors under pressure to adopt sustainable packaging solutions.

Circular plastics content in new products rose to 22% in 2024, compared to 16% ten years ago. For food and beverage manufacturers, this indicates increasing availability of food-grade recycled plastics and growing alignment with extended producer responsibility (EPR) requirements.

Packaging dominates plastic use

The packaging sector accounted for 49.4% of total plastics consumption in South Africa in 2024. Both rigid and flexible packaging formats remain essential to the food and beverage value chain, supporting product protection, shelf life and logistics efficiency.

Recycled polymers are now widely used across packaging applications, with flexible packaging alone accounting for 28% of recycled plastics end-markets.

This trend is particularly relevant for FMCG producers seeking to reduce environmental impact while maintaining performance standards.

Beyond packaging, recycled plastics are also used in agriculture (10%), clothing and footwear (12%), and construction applications. However, the limited development of non-packaging plastics sectors continues to constrain higher-value manufacturing opportunities within South Africa.

Polymer-specific recycling trends

Recycling volumes increased across several key polymers used in food and beverage packaging:

- Low and Linear Low-Density Polyethylene (LD/LLDPE): 166,692 tonnes
- Polypropylene (PP): 96,838 tonnes
- Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET): 96,635 tonnes
- High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE): 73,442 tonnes

These materials are widely used in beverage bottles, food containers, films and closures. Increased recovery and processing capacity for these polymers supports the transition to recyclable and recycled-content packaging formats.

In addition, post-industrial recyclable waste increased from 17% in 2023 to 24% in 2024. This indicates improved recovery of cleaner material streams from farms, manufacturing sites and distribution centres, which is critical for producing

high-quality recyclate suitable for food-grade applications.

Challenges

Despite positive recycling trends, systemic challenges continue to limit further growth. South Africa's recycling ecosystem remains heavily dependent on manual collection and sorting, with waste pickers and small-to-medium enterprises playing a central role.

The recycling value chain is fragmented and cost-intensive, with inefficiencies in waste collection, separation and processing. Approximately 36% of households still lack regular waste collection services, which directly impacts the availability and quality of recyclable materials.

Contamination remains a persistent issue. Poor separation at source and inconsistent municipal systems result in recyclable materials being diverted to landfill, even after initial collection. For food and beverage producers, this undermines efforts to secure consistent supplies of recycled raw materials.

Implications

For the food and beverage industry in South Africa, the 2024 data highlights both opportunity and risk. Increasing recyclate availability supports sustainable packaging targets, but supply chain volatility remains a concern.

Manufacturers are under growing pressure to:

- Increase recycled content in packaging
- Design for recyclability and circularity
- Align with EPR regulations and reporting requirements
- Strengthen partnerships with recyclers and material suppliers

At the same time, fluctuating virgin polymer prices and rising recycling costs are influencing material selection decisions.

Unlocking growth

To sustain progress, targeted interventions are required across the value chain. Plastics SA identifies several priorities:

- Improving municipal waste collection and sorting infrastructure
- Supporting investment in local recycling capacity, particularly SMEs
- Expanding end-markets for recycled plastics beyond packaging
- Driving demand through product design and responsible procurement

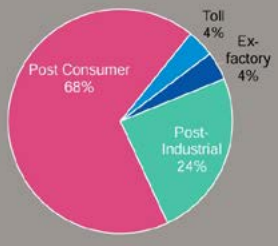
Collaboration between government, industry, producer responsibility organisations and recyclers will be essential to address structural inefficiencies.

Outlook

While 2024 reflects progress in plastics recycling and recyclate use, the outlook remains uncertain. Economic pressures, infrastructure limitations and global market dynamics will continue to influence the trajectory of South Africa's plastics industry.

For the food and beverage sector, the direction is clear: recycled plastics will play an increasingly central role in packaging strategies. However, achieving scale and consistency will depend on systemic improvements in waste management and stronger alignment across the value chain.

https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/



Post industrially sourced recyclable waste increased from 17% (2023) to 24% in 2024. Slightly cleaner waste is obtained directly from the waste generators, especially farms and contractors, rather than being sourced from landfill.

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