food & beverage REPORTER
April 2026

A STRATEGIC RESET IS UNDERWAY

for SA's confectionery industry

NEXT LEVEL PROCESSING TECH THAT GIVES YOU THE EDGE

A spicy trade debate is taking the industry by storm

Front of Pack labelling - why is reformulation on everyone's lips?

From the editor

The escalation of conflict in the Middle East is causing a systemic shock to the global food supply chain, with tangible implications for South Africa's food and beverage sector.

At the heart of the disruption lies the Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for both energy and agricultural inputs. The conflict has curtailed the flow of oil, gas and fertiliser feedstocks, driving sharp price increases across these commodities. Oil prices have surged by over 40%, while fertiliser costs, already accounting for up to 35% of grain production inputs, continue to climb.

This dual shock is particularly significant. Fertiliser production is highly energy-intensive, and reduced supply, combined with higher input costs, threatens global crop yields. Analysts warn that sustained disruption could lead to lower planting rates and declining output, amplifying food price inflation into 2027.

The impact is both direct and systemic. Rising diesel costs are inflating logistics expenses across the value chain, from farm to shelf. Given the country's reliance on road freight, higher fuel prices quickly translate into elevated retail food prices. Additionally, a weaker rand, driven by global market volatility, further increases the cost of imported inputs such as fertilisers and certain food categories.

For South Africa's food and beverage industry, the message is clear: resilience strategies, ranging from supplier diversification to energy efficiency, are no longer optional. As geopolitical risk reshapes global supply dynamics, agility will define competitiveness in an increasingly volatile market.

And South Africa is renowned for its agility and adaptability in times of crisis. Watch this space!

In this issue, we highlight **Coca-Cola's** R17.6 billion investment in the country; we look into the implications of a packaging trade dispute between the manufacturers of Tabasco® and the Stoli Group; and we examine how **Botselo Mills** grew from delivering maize to farmers via a single bakkie to supplying the **Shoprite Group**.

Read how the country's snacks and confectionery industry is entering a decisive reset, and how winning consumer loyalty requires more than a health halo; it also demands great taste, plus, how **Symrise** celebrates Vanilla Day.

Sial Paris 2026 is set to be the most ambitious in the show's history, while **Interpack** showcases how food manufacturers can optimise every stage of production through smarter, more efficient processing and packaging solutions.

For the packaging sector, entries are now open for **Gold Pack 2026.** We look at how **PulPac** is extending its Dry Molded Fiber technology into caps and closures, how **BMT** is using its SMART prototyping approach in developing cost-effective bottle designs, and new analysis from **NeilsenIQ** in collaboration with **Kearney** indicates how AI technologies are enabling faster and more precise product development.

Enjoy the read

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Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator hosts SA Youth Employer Breakfast in Cape Town

During March, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, in partnership with the Western Cape's Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT), hosted the SA Youth Employer Breakfast at Makers Landing in Cape Town, bringing together over 130 leaders, employers and policymakers from across sectors to connect and explore how they can access and harness youth talent more effectively, to drive economic inclusion at scale in the Western Cape.

According to the latest Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q4:2025, South Africa's expanded youth unemployment rate now stands at 52.43%, with just around 8.8 million young people unemployed and classified as Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET). The Western Cape continues to have the lowest official unemployment rate in South Africa at 18.1%, and the lowest NEET rate at 33.3% (Q3, 2025). Despite this, the Western Cape, like the rest of South Africa, faces a range of deep, interconnected, socio-economic challenges, including youth unemployment, poverty and crime.

Against the backdrop of the province's Growth for Jobs Strategy (G4J), employers, government partners, and ecosystem actors came together with a shared commitment: to unlock pathways for young people and build a more inclusive, future ready labour market.

Harambee's CEO, Kasthuri Soni, implored leaders to recognise that purpose and profit are not mutually exclusive. Her challenge resonated strongly with employers who are already proving that inclusive hiring strengthens businesses, communities, and economies.

In his keynote address, Dr Rashid Toefy, Deputy Director General (DDG) at DEDAT, urged employers to "hire differently, collaborate with others, share learnings and measure your outcomes". His provocation reinforced that youth employment is not a policy challenge alone, but one that requires bold leadership and coordinated action. With more than 500,000 young people in the Western Cape already registered on SA Youth, the opportunity and responsibility are clear. Employers have access to a wide pool of entry level talent that is ready to work, ready to grow, and ready to contribute.

Kissabel® builds momentum in South Africa and Southern Hemisphere markets

Kissabel® is accelerating its global rollout, with South Africa emerging as a key development market following a record European season. The coloured-flesh apple brand, spanning pink to deep red interiors, is gaining traction through a combination of increased volumes, strong consumer engagement, and targeted brand-building initiatives.

In South Africa, Dutoit Group is leading early-stage commercialisation, transitioning from concept orchards to scalable production. Commercial orchard rollout is planned from 2027, with promising prospects for both local and export markets. The strategy focuses on converting consumer curiosity into trial through in-store tastings and digital engagement.

Across the Southern Hemisphere, partners in Australia, Chile, Argentina and New Zealand are expanding trials and early commercial volumes, with Australia currently the most advanced market.

The strong 2025 European performance—marked by a 25% increase in volumes and high-quality yields—has reinforced confidence in the brand's premium positioning. For producers and retailers, Kissabel® represents a differentiated, experience-driven fruit category aligned with evolving consumer demand for novelty, flavour, and visual appeal.

DGB secures historic Mundus Vini recognition, reinforcing global competitiveness

DGB has cemented its position as a global leader in wine production, earning Best Producer South Africa for a fifth consecutive year at the 2026 Mundus Vini Spring Tasting. In a landmark achievement, the company was also named Best South African Producer Over the Past 25 Years—an unprecedented accolade in the competition's history.

The recognition, awarded at ProWein in Düsseldorf, reflects sustained excellence rather than short-term performance. DGB's portfolio delivered a strong medal haul, including one Grand Gold, 27 Gold and 19 Silver awards, highlighting consistency across multiple brands and varietals.

Notably, Bellingham's 2024 The Bernard Series Old Vine Chenin Blanc secured Best of Show South Africa White, reinforcing the premium positioning of South African white wines in export markets.

For the industry, DGB's performance underscores the growing competitiveness of South African producers on the global stage. The results also highlight the value of portfolio diversification and quality-led strategies in maintaining export momentum amid increasing international competition.

In-flight dining gains new heights

LIFT is introducing a refreshed onboard dining experience through its new catering partnerships, bringing a thoughtful, chef-led approach to meals and beverages served at 36,000 ft.

LIFT has partnered with Siyathemba Catering, showcasing its ongoing commitment to enhancing the passenger journey through an elevated Premium onboard catering offering. By collaborating with the specialist aviation caterer, the airline aims to introduce menus that reflect quality ingredients, thoughtful preparation and a modern culinary perspective.

Founded in 2009, Siyathemba Catering is known for its precision-driven kitchen culture and high culinary standards. The Siyathemba team developed the current menu rotation - a seasonal Summer Collection menu - inspired by freshness, colour and layered flavours. The new LIFT Premium menu celebrates the vibrancy of seasonal ingredients, brought together through balanced and carefully considered flavour profiles.

Dishes are designed to create a sensory experience, combining precision-cut proteins with silky purées, vibrant vegetables and carefully placed garnishes. Herbaceous notes, subtle sweetness from seasonal produce and contrasting textures all contribute to a menu that is both visually striking and satisfying.

"We're genuinely excited to be partnering with LIFT and to be part of shaping a more memorable inflight experience. For us, it's about the small details- thoughtful presentation, care in every element, and creating a seamless service that passengers can truly feel. Together, we want to make each journey not just comfortable, but something people remember and enjoy," says CEO, Sonette Joubert from Siyathemba Catering.

EU monacolin restrictions drive shift toward systems-based heart health solutions

Impending EU restrictions on monacolins are set to reshape the cardiovascular health ingredient landscape, prompting a strategic shift toward multi-pathway, systems-based solutions.

According to ACI Group, the regulatory move exposes a fundamental limitation in traditional heart health formulations, which have historically focused on single-active cholesterol reduction. With safety concerns around liver and muscle toxicity driving the restrictions, the industry is being forced to rethink category design rather than simply replace ingredients.

Attention is now turning to integrated botanical systems targeting multiple metabolic pathways, including liver function, lipid metabolism, inflammation and vascular health. Ingredients such as bergamot-derived polyphenols, combined with artichoke leaf extract in clinically studied formulations like Bergacyn® FF, are gaining traction.

For manufacturers, this marks a transition from “hero ingredient” positioning to more complex, evidence-based formulations. The shift presents both formulation challenges and innovation opportunities, particularly for brands looking to differentiate in an increasingly regulated and scientifically scrutinised nutraceutical market.

Rhodes Quality wins global gold, spotlighting South African preserve excellence

Rhodes Quality has achieved international acclaim after its Ruby Grapefruit Marmalade secured a Gold Award at the 2026 Dalemain World Marmalade Awards.

The competition, which attracted over 3,400 entries from 33 countries, highlights the growing global sophistication and diversity within the preserves category. Rhodes Quality’s entry stood out in a highly competitive field featuring innovative flavour combinations and artisanal techniques.

The win reinforces the brand’s heritage in jams and marmalades while positioning it within the premium, export-ready segment of the category. For South African producers, the recognition underscores the potential to compete globally through quality, consistency and flavour innovation.

As consumer interest in artisanal and differentiated pantry products continues to rise, such accolades provide valuable brand equity and export leverage. The achievement also reflects broader opportunities for value-added fruit processing within the local food and beverage sector.

Community nutrition initiative expands

Albany Bakeries has expanded its community nutrition initiative through the "Feel the Freshness. Win a Loafie" campaign, delivering 20 000 loaves of bread to four schools across South Africa. The programme targets schools in underserved communities in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, reinforcing the role of staple foods in school nutrition programmes.

The "Feel the Freshness. Win a Loafie" campaign, saw listeners of popular national radio shows nominated those schools in their communities they felt most deserved to receive daily deliveries of fresh Albany bread.

The selected schools, Saambou Primary School in Manenberg, Willows Primary School in Heideveld, Bruntville Primary School in Mooi River, and St Vincent School for the Deaf in Johannesburg, will receive ongoing weekly and daily bread deliveries. Distribution from bakeries located near each school is structured to maintain product freshness while ensuring continuity of supply. The initiative is designed to supplement existing feeding schemes, supporting learner concentration and participation in the classroom.

In addition to the initial rollout, Albany will donate a further 3 000 loaves to three more schools in communities with identified need. This aligns with broader trends in the South African food and beverage sector, where brands are integrating corporate social investment with core product distribution.

The campaign builds on Albany's "Fresh Just Got Tastier" platform and incorporates consumer engagement through retail participation and promotional incentives. Collaborations with local personalities have supported reach and awareness, linking brand visibility with social impact.

From a B2B perspective, the initiative highlights how large-scale bakery operations can leverage supply chain efficiencies to support food security while reinforcing brand positioning in the competitive bread market.

www.albany.co.za

TABASCO® meets Vodka: A spicy trade dress dispute

What do vodka and pepper sauce have in common? Surprisingly, their packaging

In January 2026, the McIlhenny Company, a Louisiana-based family business behind the world-famous TABASCO® pepper sauce, filed a lawsuit in a Texas federal court against spirit producer Stoli Group (USA) LLC, alleging that Stoli's new "Halapeño Pepper" vodka infringes on the trade dress of its TABASCO® pepper sauce.

To make matters hotter, McIlhenny alleges that it had previously explored a potential collaboration with Stoli for a co-branded vodka, one that ultimately never made it to the bottle. Despite this, McIlhenny claims Stoli proceeded to cook up its own pepper-flavoured vodka.

McIlhenny argues that Stoli's vodka bottle resembles the iconic TABASCO® bottle, from its shape, colour scheme, green neck label, and red cap to the broken concentric circle design in the centre of the bottle, with green and red sans serif font. McIlhenny argues that these similarities could lead consumers to believe that Stoli's spicy vodka is connected to, authorised, or licensed by the famed hot sauce brand.

Spicing up the law: Trade dress protection in the United States and South Africa

Unlike trade marks that protect words, names and logos, trade dress protects the visual appearance and overall look and get-up of a product, including its label and packaging.

In the United States (US), the Lanham Act permits the registration of trade dress provided it is both distinctive and non-functional. To succeed in an infringement claim, a plaintiff must establish that its trade dress qualifies for protection; and that the defendant's use of a similar trade dress is likely to cause confusion among consumers as to its origin, sponsorship or affiliation.

In this matter, McIlhenny alleges that its TABASCO® bottle, which has remained largely unchanged since the 1920s, meets these requirements. It has been extensively marketed for decades, is the subject of multiple trade mark registrations, and has become instantly recognisable to consumers.

McIlhenny therefore argues that the similarities in Stoli's pepper-flavoured vodka packaging are such that an ordinary consumer would be likely to assume a commercial connection with TABASCO®.

South African law provides similar protections, just framed a bit differently. Distinctive packaging and labels can be registered as trade marks. Even if it's not registered, trade dress can still be protected through the common law doctrine of unlawful competition, for preventing passing-off. To succeed in a claim of passing-off, the plaintiff must prove that it has established goodwill in its goods or services; that the defendant has made a misrepresentation likely to deceive or confuse consumers into believing that its goods are connected with or endorsed by, the plaintiff; and that such misrepresentation has caused, or is likely to cause damage.

South African Courts have consistently recognised that a distinctive get-up can establish protectable goodwill, which can be protected against passing-off.

For instance, in the Swartkops Sea Salt (Pty) Ltd v Cerbos Ltd ([2013] ZAECGHC 45; 2013 BIP 45) matter, the Eastern Cape High Court considered whether the overall get-up of Cerebos' Buffalo braai salt misrepresented a connection with Swartkops' long-established Marina braai salt. The court examined whether the Marina packaging (the familiar orange bottle with a brown lid, for the braai aficionados) had acquired goodwill, whether the similarities in the respective packaging were likely to confuse or deceive ordinary consumers, and whether such confusion would cause damage to Swartkops' goodwill.

The Court held that the correct enquiry is whether the overall impression of the products is likely to mislead the ordinary consumer rather than by conducting a side-by-side comparison of differences stating that:

"The ordinary everyday buyer especially of commodities such as groceries [is] a person who has a general idea in his mind's eye of what he is looking for, who, however, does not have an accurate representation of it, who will not have the advantage of seeing two products side by side."

Applied to this matter, the passing-off enquiry would be whether consumers associate the get-up with TABASCO® (goodwill), whether the similarities would mislead consumers (misrepresentation), and whether this could harm TABASCO®'s brand (damage). This assessment would be guided by the overall impression created by the TABASCO® and vodka products, rather than by minor differences in their respective get ups.

McIlhenny owns various trade marks registrations for the TABASCO® bottle and elements of its trade dress in South Africa. These registrations cover, among other things, a range of goods, including sauces, clothing and non-alcoholic beverages.

To establish trade mark infringement, McIlhenny would need to show that the allegedly infringing packaging constitutes use in the course of trade, of a mark that is identical or confusingly similar to its registered trade marks, in relation to goods that are the same as, similar to those for which the marks are registered, and that such use is likely to cause confusion or deception among consumers.

In addition, McIlhenny could rely on the well-known mark provisions of the Trade Marks Act (194 of 1993). Where a mark is well-known in South Africa, protection extends beyond the specific goods or services for which it is registered. To rely on this provision, McIlhenny would need to show that the TABASCO® mark enjoys a significant reputation in South Africa, and that use of similar packaging or branding on goods for which its trade marks are not registered, such as a chilli-flavoured vodka, would be likely to take unfair advantage of, or be detrimental to, the distinctive character or repute of the TABASCO® mark, even where the goods are not identical.

Heat up your IP strategy: Protecting IP across collabs and line extensions

A key theme in the lawsuit is that TABASCO®'s trade dress is not limited to hot sauce. McIlhenny has long licensed its trade dress across a wide range of products, including salad dressings, snacks, apparel and cosmetics. Consumers have therefore become accustomed to seeing the TABASCO® trade dress across different product categories. This strengthens

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the argument that consumers would reasonably assume that a similarly packaged chilli flavoured vodka is an authorised TABASCO® product extension.

From a brand protection perspective, the case is a useful reminder that businesses should not only protect trade marks and trade dress of existing products, but also for plausible line extensions and collaborations into which they could realistically expand.

By anticipating now, how a brand may grow or collaborate with others, companies can use intellectual property protection proactively to prevent imitation when it arises in future.

Lessons in every Label

This case demonstrates that packaging is more than a marketing device; it is a core component of a brand's IP. Across jurisdictions, from the United States to South Africa, the principle is the same: a product's appearance can function as a valuable asset and copying or imitating features of a product's packaging can land competitors in hot water.

As the dispute heats up, we are reminded of the commercial power of trade dress and the risks that arise when brand boundaries are tested. For businesses operating in crowded and increasingly converging markets, careful consideration of packaging and trade mark strategy remains essential to preserving goodwill and brand integrity. One thing's for certain, it will be worth keeping an eye on the bottle to see how the judgment finally pours out.

Companies looking to protect their products should also view trade dress and trade mark protection as part of a broader, forward looking IP strategy. This includes registering distinctive packaging and labels as trade marks, not only for products they currently sell, but also for realistic line extensions and adjacent product categories they may expand into over time. A bit of foresight at the start can help ensure that a brand's growth doesn't come with an unwelcome lawsuit burn.

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Nishaat Slamdien with oversight by John Foster, Partner, Spoor & Fisher

Coca-Cola commits R17.6 billion investment

The Coca-Cola system in South Africa has announced a planned R17.6 billion investment through 2030, reinforcing long-term confidence in the country's food and beverage sector and broader economic outlook. Coca-Cola and its authorised bottlers, Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa and Coca-Cola Peninsula Beverages, will channel investment into expanded production capacity, distribution infrastructure and product innovation.

The announcement was made at the sixth South Africa Investment Conference (SAIC) in Johannesburg by Luis Felipe Avellar, president of The Coca-Cola Company's Africa operating unit. The investment is positioned to enhance operational efficiency and strengthen supply chain resilience within South Africa's competitive beverage manufacturing landscape.

For stakeholders across the South African food and beverage B2B market, the investment signals increased activity in key areas such as beverage production expansion, local sourcing strategies, and logistics optimisation. It also aligns with broader industry priorities around localisation and supply chain integration.

A recent socio-economic impact study conducted by Steward Redqueen highlights the scale of the Coca-Cola system's contribution to the South African economy. In 2024, the system generated R51.2 billion in value-added economic activity, underlining its role as a major contributor to the country's FMCG sector.

The study further indicates that the Coca-Cola system supported more than 87,000 jobs across its value chain, spanning retail, agriculture, manufacturing, transport and services. This includes 7,822 direct jobs and approximately 79,300 indirect and induced employment opportunities. The multiplier effect, where one direct job supports ten additional jobs, demonstrates the system's extensive economic footprint.

Local procurement remains a central pillar of Coca-Cola's South African operations. In 2024, the system sourced R25.6 billion worth of goods and services from local suppliers. This includes inputs from sugar producers, packaging manufacturers, logistics providers and marketing services, contributing to industrial development and supplier growth within the domestic economy.

From a B2B perspective, this level of local sourcing creates sustained demand across multiple supplier categories, presenting opportunities for small and medium enterprises operating within the food and beverage ecosystem. It also supports supplier diversification and strengthens local manufacturing capabilities.

Beyond economic metrics, the Coca-Cola system continues to invest in sustainability initiatives, including the Africa Water Stewardship Initiative. This programme represents a nearly $25 million commitment through 2030 to address water security challenges in communities across 20 African countries, including South Africa. For the beverage sector, water stewardship remains a critical operational and reputational priority.

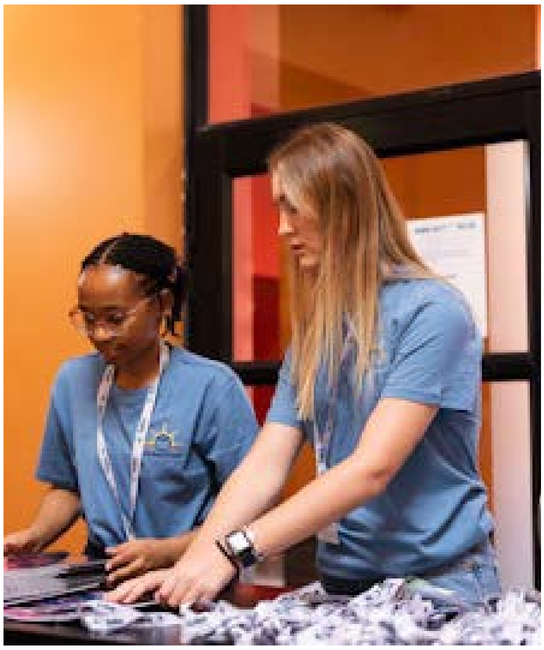
The investment announcement follows Coca-Cola HBC's agreement to acquire a majority stake in Coca-Cola Beverages Africa, further emphasising South Africa's strategic importance within the group's African portfolio. This development is expected to support continued growth, operational alignment and capital investment in the region.

For industry players, the Coca-Cola system's investment highlights key trends shaping the South African beverage industry: increased capital expenditure, localisation of supply chains, and a focus on sustainable production. As the market evolves, these factors will play a central role in driving competitiveness and long-term growth across the food and beverage sector.

With implementation set to continue through 2030, the investment positions the Coca-Cola system as a key driver of economic activity, supply chain development and industrial growth within South Africa's food and beverage landscape.

www.coca-cola.com/za/en

Engineering the future of flavour and fragrance



SAAFFI's 24th annual seminar and workshop reinforced the central role of flavour and fragrance in enhancing consumer experience, strengthening product appeal, and ensuring brand consistency while making it clear that the industry must rapidly adapt to an evolving, more complex consumer landscape.

A defining theme was the rise of the "augmented" flavourist and perfumer. The next generation of development is being shaped by the convergence of artificial intelligence, advanced biotechnology, and human sensory expertise. The message was unequivocal: AI is not a replacement, but a force multiplier - enabling broader ingredient exploration, predictive formulation, and faster innovation cycles, while trained sensory panels remain critical to validating the emotional and experiential dimensions of taste and smell.

From a strategic perspective, SAAFFI's "Toolkit for the Future" signals a shift from fragmented capabilities to integrated competitiveness built on three core pillars. First, data-driven innovation, embedding AI-assisted formulation, biotech-derived ingredients, digitised sensory systems, and rapid prototyping into R&D pipelines. Second, sustainable and ethical value chains where traceability, green chemistry, and local supplier development (particularly around indigenous botanicals) become sources of differentiation rather than compliance burdens. Third, consumer-centric innovation by moving beyond product push toward continuous insight generation, co-creation, and culturally relevant solutions tailored to diverse African markets.

Critically, the seminar emphasised execution. SAAFFI is increasingly positioning itself as an enabler of measurable change through ongoing learning platforms, technical workshops, and structured collaboration across its member base. Post-event engagement will focus on continuous capability building, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and alignment with global regulatory frameworks and best practices.

AI's role in the African context was framed as transformative. Beyond improving formulation efficiency and sensory modelling, it offers the ability to build proprietary datasets that reflect regional taste profiles by allowing local players to leapfrog legacy systems and compete through speed, cost-efficiency, and relevance. This is particularly important as companies look to compress development timelines and respond more dynamically to shifting consumer demand.

On regulatory readiness, SAAFFI continues to act as both anchor and translator by interpreting complex international frameworks and embedding compliance into the innovation process. This reduces risk while ensuring South African manufacturers remain globally aligned without sacrificing agility.

Competitiveness against global majors was positioned not as a scale game, but as a strategic one. Local players are encouraged to leverage biodiversity, develop traceable ingredient pipelines, and build deep, data-backed consumer understanding. Combined with agile R&D and strategic partnerships, this enables faster response times and differentiated offerings that are difficult to replicate at scale.

Sustainability and supply chain resilience emerged as urgent priorities. The industry is moving from reactive sourcing to engineered supply systems is characterised by multi-sourcing strategies, ingredient flexibility, local ecosystem development, strategic stock buffering, and increasing exploration of biotech alternatives. The focus is on designing resilience into supply chains while embedding ethical sourcing and traceability.

SAAFFI also highlighted the importance of inclusive growth. Efforts to integrate small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs into formal value chains are gaining momentum through capability development, aggregation models, and alignment with global traceability and benefit-sharing frameworks. This approach not only strengthens supply security but also ensures local value creation.

A key constraint remains skills. The industry faces a shortage of hybrid talent capable of operating across science, data, regulation, and consumer insight. In response, SAAFFI is deepening partnerships with academia, expanding training platforms, and promoting internships and mentorship programmes to build a future-ready workforce.

Looking ahead, SAAFFI is fostering a networked innovation ecosystem—linking committees, academia, and industry into a distributed engine for growth rather than a single central hub. Success will be measured not just by participation, but by tangible shifts in capability adoption, collaboration, and innovation outcomes.

By 2030, the vision is clear: a globally competitive, innovation-led South African flavour and fragrance industry, rooted in local biodiversity, enabled by advanced technology, and defined by speed, sustainability, and cultural relevance. SAAFFI's role as strategic coordinator, standards-setter, and industry connector will be central to achieving this ambition.

"SAAFFI is increasingly positioning itself as an enabler of measurable change through ongoing learning platforms, technical workshops, and structured collaboration across its member base"

www.saaffi.co.za

Does ambiguous refill water pose risks to South African consumers?

South Africa's growing demand for alternative drinking water sources has led to an increase in refill water stations. While these provide a seemingly affordable and accessible solution, they operate in a regulatory grey area, posing significant risks to public health, food safety and consumer trust. The South African National Bottled Water Association (SANBWA) warns that urgent intervention is required to ensure consumers are not misled by potentially unsafe drinking water.

Legislative interpretation

Charlotte Metcalf, CEO of SANBWA, highlights the stark contrast between regulated packaged water and the largely uncontrolled refill water industry: "Packaged water is classified and legislated by the Department of Health as a food product, meaning it must adhere to legislation in the FC&D Act. SANBWA member bottlers further adhere to strict internationally benchmarked safety and quality controls. In contrast, refill stations and shops are not held to the same rigorous standards, leading to concerns over contamination and consumer safety."

Refilled water is assumed to be classified as drinking water and must adhere to SANS 241 as does tap water. There are no legislated requirements for treatments allowed, however, and so the possibility exists for unsafe sources and insufficient physical and chemical treatments to be used. This category only allows for water to be filled on the spot in new bottles provided by the shop or in consumers' own bottles. When shops prefill water into sealed bottles the category changes to packaged water and all food legislation must apply.

The dangers of refilled water

Refill water is mostly sourced from municipal taps and may initially meet drinking water standards. It

could also be sourced from unprotected boreholes in commercial areas or from water transported in tanks. The source water is rarely tested to ensure that the processing capabilities of purification equipment can indeed remove all chemical and microbiological contaminants. After the removal of chlorine the final product is unprotected from any contamination from pipes, tanks, filling nozzles, the environment and handling. Unlike packaged bottled water, it lacks the necessary protections for long-term storage or microbiological safety. There is no (or at best irregular) testing of the final product to verify consumer safety.

Equipment such as pipes, taps and lids used in the refilling process are in some cases rarely sanitised to the required food safety standards. Consumers often handle the filling equipment in retail environments, increasing the likelihood of contamination.

Furthermore, the removal of municipal chlorine from the water creates an environment where bacteria such as Pseudomonas and E. coli - introduced by unsanitary conditions and human handling - can thrive.

While packaged water must by law consider safe product handling and storage and verify the shelf life refilled water does not take this into consideration. Storing bulk drinking water safely will depend on the hygiene in the facility, the bottle cleanliness and the processing efficiency as well as the way the water is handled when exposed, consumed and stored.

The murky grey area of pre-filled bottles

One of the most pressing concerns is the illegal pre-filling of water bottles at refill stations. According to Metcalf, many refillers are illegally pre-filling and selling water as a packaged water product without adhering to food safety regulations: "Consumers may believe they are purchasing safe, packaged water when, in reality, they are exposed to a product with no traceability, unknown shelf life and significant contamination risks."

According to South African food safety legislation, bottled water must be produced in controlled environments with proper hygiene, risk assessments, verified shelf life and traceability. But many refill stations pre-fill and store water without these essential protections: "This practice undermines trust in the industry, misleads consumers and creates an unfair competitive environment for legitimate packaged water producers."

This grey area is exacerbated by unscrupulous companies selling plug-and-play water bottling systems and franchises to uninformed customers who believe that they are starting a refilling AND water bottling business.

Metcalf stresses that addressing this issue requires strict enforcement of food safety laws and penalties for non-compliance: "Without proper regulation, consumer confidence in the safety of their drinking water will continue to erode."

Ensuring safe drinking water for all

"We must ensure that every South African has access to safe, reliable drinking water, whether it comes in a sealed bottle or from a tap, but riding on the back of the packaged water industry and misleading the public is not the answer." Metcalf says.

SANBWA calls for urgent collaboration between regulators, industry stakeholders and consumers to distinguish clearly between packaged water, which adheres to stringent safety protocols, and refill water, which remains largely unregulated: "While affordability is important, it cannot come at the expense of public health and consumer safety."

The water refill industry needs minimum standards and must refrain from producing packaged water in unsuitable shop environments.

www.sanbwa.org.za

Hiring faster but trusting less - verification impacts South Africa's labour market

South Africa's labour market is under pressure, but not in the way many people think. While unemployment remains persistently high, employers are not simply rushing to fill roles, but are becoming deliberate, cautious, and significantly more focused on risk. The result is a hiring environment defined by a difficult balancing act: how to move quickly, without compromising on trust.

Recent background screening data, based on more than three million transactions completed in 2025, reflects this. Employers are still hiring at scale, particularly among younger candidates entering the workforce, but they are no longer taking information at face value.

In a competitive labour market, where opportunities are limited and pressure on candidates is high, discrepancies in applications are not common. Whether it is misrepresented qualifications, undisclosed criminal records, identity inconsistencies or financial risk indicators, the data points to a consistent reality that a meaningful portion of applications carry some level of risk.

The cost of a bad hire today extends far beyond salary and onboarding. It includes reputational damage, regulatory implications, operational disruption and, in some cases, direct financial loss. In this context, verification has become less of an administrative step and more of a business imperative.

Organisations are increasingly moving away from standardised screening processes applied uniformly across all roles. Instead, they are adopting risk-based models, where the level of verification is aligned to the responsibilities and exposure associated with a position.

> **"In a competitive labour market, where opportunities are limited and pressure on candidates is high, discrepancies in applications are not common"**

Roles involving access to cash or finances, sensitive data or regulatory accountability typically require deeper checks, including criminal verification, financial history assessments, and additional compliance screening. By contrast, lower-risk roles are screened more efficiently, ensuring that hiring processes remain practical and commercially viable.

This shift is not only improving risk management. It is also enabling organisations to allocate resources more effectively, focusing attention where it matters most. But, at the same time, the need for speed and accuracy has not gone away.

Employers are still operating in a competitive hiring environment, where delays can result in losing strong candidates. What has changed is how this is achieved as organisations turn to technology to streamline verification processes without compromising accuracy.

Digital screening platforms, integrated HR systems, and AI-enabled tools are allowing checks to be conducted faster and at greater scale. This is particularly important in high-volume recruitment environments, where large numbers of candidates need to be assessed consistently and efficiently.

Integration is playing a critical role here. When screening is embedded directly into recruitment workflows, organisations can initiate and complete checks seamlessly, reducing administrative delays and supporting faster decision-making.

As more aspects of daily life move online, employers are paying closer attention to candidates' public digital footprints. Social media screening, once considered a supplementary check, is becoming more widely adopted as organisations seek to identify potential reputational risks that may not be visible through formal verification channels.

This is not about scrutinising personal opinions, but rather about identifying behaviours that could pose a risk to workplace culture, brand integrity, or regulatory compliance. As digital and professional identities become increasingly intertwined, this layer of insight is becoming more relevant.

These developments are taking place within a broader labour market context shaped by youth participation. Candidates between the ages of 18 and 34 account for the majority of screening activity, reflecting the significant number of young people entering formal employment channels. Many of these candidates bring potential, adaptability, and a willingness to learn, qualities that employers are increasingly valuing.

This trend reinforces the importance of consistent and fair verification practices. As organisations adopt more inclusive hiring approaches, particularly for entry-level roles, decisions are based on accurate and verified information becomes even more critical.

Looking ahead, these trends are likely to accelerate. We can expect deeper integration between screening and recruitment systems, greater use of automation and artificial intelligence, and more sophisticated approaches to identity verification as organisations respond to rising fraud risks in an increasingly digital environment.

There is also likely to be growing interest in continuous screening models, where verification extends beyond the point of hire to support ongoing risk management in high-trust or regulated roles.

In today's environment, trust can no longer be assumed, but must be supported by accurate, timely and consistent verification.

Author
Jennifer Barkhuizen

ADVERTORIAL

SG 4/4 steam cleaner for professional food and beverage applications

The SG 4/4 steam cleaner, developed by Kärcher, a global leader in cleaning technology, is a professional-grade solution specifically suited to the rigorous hygiene demands of the food and beverage industry. The machine is designed to support cleaning operations across commercial kitchens, food preparation areas, restaurants, bakeries, catering facilities, and refrigerated storage environments, where high standards of cleanliness and operational efficiency are critical.

High-performance, chemical-free cleaning

The SG 4/4 delivers 4 bar steam pressure, enabling effective and hygienic cleaning without the use of additional detergents. This capability is particularly important in food and beverage environments, where the reduction of chemical residues is essential for maintaining food safety standards. The high-temperature steam effectively removes grease, oil, food residues, and limescale, thereby contributing to improved sanitation and limiting the conditions that allow bacteria to thrive.

Continuous operation for demanding environments

A key feature of the SG 4/4 is its continuous fill system, which allows for long working intervals without interruption. The unit holds 4 litres of fresh water, distributed between a boiler and a refill tank. Water is continuously supplied during operation via an integrated pump, ensuring minimal downtime during busy service periods. Additionally, this design enables shorter heating times, as only a portion of the water needs to be heated at any given time.

Versatile accessories for multiple cleaning tasks

The SG 4/4 is equipped with a comprehensive range of accessories, enhancing its versatility across various food and beverage cleaning applications. The machine includes two floor nozzles—one with bristles for removing coarse dirt and another designed for hygienic surface treatment using a cotton cover. A handset is provided for smaller surfaces such as taps, counters, and food display units, while a variety of brushes and crevice tools allow for effective cleaning of hard-to-reach areas. These features enable thorough hygiene across complex surfaces and equipment commonly found in professional kitchens and service areas.

Ergonomic and user-centred design

The SG 4/4 places strong emphasis on ergonomics and ease of handling. Weighing approximately 8 kilograms, the unit can be transported easily using its integrated carrying handle, with an optional trolley available for longer distances. A 2.5-metre steam hose provides a wide operating radius, reducing the need to reposition the machine during cleaning. Its compact construction also ensures convenient storage in environments where space is limited.

www.kaercher.com

Botselo Mills: The family business feeding the nation

Family-run Botselo Mills, based in Delareyville, North West, has come a long way from delivering maize to nearby farmers in a single bakkie, to supplying over 120 tons a month — enough to feed a small city — to more than 1 176 Shoprite and Usave stores through the retailer's national distribution network.

Since partnering with the Shoprite Group, it has grown revenue by more than 8 000% in just four years, establishing itself as a national brand competing with some of South Africa's biggest maize producers.

A pivotal 2022 meeting set Botselo Mills on its meteoric growth trajectory, with Africa's largest grocery retailer recognising its potential to scale from a regional mill into a national supplier and an important contributor to South Africa's food security.

"They challenged us to supply on a national scale — and we were left with no option but to deliver," says Fanie Schoeman, CEO of Botselo Mills.

In 1982, the Hobson family began milling maize in a converted farm shed near Stella, North West. Originally trading as Batho Bothle, the business steadily expanded. In 2008, it relocated to Delareyville, rebranded as Botselo Mills, and invested in infrastructure, equipment, and packaging to establish a national footprint.

"Our turning point came when we secured our first listing with the Shoprite Group," remembers Schoeman. "The partnership has opened the doors to nationwide distribution - from Cape Town to Musina - and has grown to include the packaging of Shoprite Ritebrand and Usave Ubrand maize products."

"Botselo Mills was well positioned to grow beyond its regional base, and through our partnership we've introduced the brand to more households across the country," says Louis du Plessis, Deputy General Manager for Food Buying at the Shoprite Group.

"It means our customers have greater access to affordable, quality maize, while we are simultaneously supporting local producers and contributing to the country's economic growth."

The milling business remains deeply rooted in the Delareyville community. Majority of its 563 employees live in the surrounding area, and over the past 15 years, the workforce has grown by nearly 300%, shaping both the business and the town itself.

Its presence has brought tangible changes: a commercial bank opened a branch to serve the expanding workforce, while an on-site clinic provides primary healthcare in a region where services can be scarce.

Schoeman highlights Botselo Mills' commitment to the wider community, which includes support to schools, crèches, churches, and care homes. "Our work is intertwined with the town's wellbeing — what's good for the community is good for us, and vice versa," he says.

With a strong focus on innovation and sustainability, Botselo Mills launched a 2.5kg brick pack to replace traditional plastic bags - significantly boosting packaging efficiency - and soon followed with a brick pack design for its Super White Instant 1kg product.

"Sustainability remains central to our operations, focusing on responsible local sourcing, eco-friendly packaging, and minimizing environmental impact," says Schoeman.

From modest beginnings using second-hand equipment, Botselo Mills is now a national success story built on family values and community, strengthened by Shoprite's support to expand distribution, grow operations, and bring affordable staples to families across South Africa.

www.botselo.co.za

Meeting great taste and label expectations through reformulation

Winning consumer loyalty requires more than a health halo – it demands great taste. When nutritional cues and taste expectations work together, brands can turn first-time trials into repeat purchases. Constantin Drapatz, Business Manager, Texture Solutions EMEA at Ingredion, explores how brands can meet these challenges by addressing current and new food label categories and how they drive consumer choice in the Middle East and Africa.

New labelling systems are designed to help consumers make more informed decisions by giving them the information needed to choose food that supports their health and wellness goals. The challenge for food and beverage brands is to deliver the labelling cues consumers look for while meeting expectations for taste, texture and price.

Consumers are driving demand for clean label, calling for products with more natural or familiar ingredients on the label, and pushing back against products with high sugar content, or foods with long and complex lists of ingredients.

Consumer sugar consumption has shifted dramatically. Our research shows that 64% of consumers worldwide are trying to reduce their sugar intake for health reasons, while 42% are actively reducing sugar to lose weight. They are making informed decisions based on growing awareness of the excessive use of sugar's connection to obesity, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. The regulatory environment reinforces these consumer trends.

Setting the standard

Regulations around Front-of-Pack (FOP) nutritional labelling vary around the world. In some countries, such as the UK, it is voluntary, although most supermarkets and brands do choose to provide it. Other countries have gone further and introduced mandatory FOP nutritional labelling requirements.

Last year, the Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (ADQCC) and the Abu Dhabi Public Health

"As tools such as front-of-pack labelling become more widespread, and consumer awareness around healthy choices is heightened, adapting to meet the preferred on-pack claims becomes a necessity. One in two consumers globally look to on-pack claims to determine nutrition, health and wellness values of food and beverage products"

Centre (ADPHC) launched Nutri-Mark, a front-of-pack nutritional label designed to highlight products with higher nutritional value. The UAE has now confirmed that Nutri-Mark will be elevated to a federal regulation, which could be mandatory and enforced by August 2026.

In Saudi Arabia, a new comprehensive nutritional transparency law extends to restaurants, cafes and bakeries. In the summer of 2025, Saudi food labelling regulations were officially revised by the Saudi Food & Drug Authority (SFDA), as part of broader efforts to align with international food standards.

New rules for packaging and labelling fruits and vegetables in Saudi Arabia's public markets were also announced in September, and it is widely anticipated that further policy interventions may include compulsory FOP labels like the Nutri- Mark program in UAE.

Clean label reformulation

As tools such as front-of-pack labelling become more widespread, and consumer awareness around healthy choices is heightened, adapting to meet the preferred on-pack claims becomes a necessity. One in two consumers globally look to on-pack claims to determine nutrition, health and wellness values of food and beverage products.

The clean label approach is one way forward. Reformulating with ingredients that consumers recognise and prefer, such as functional-native starches and citrus fibres, can improve the nutritional labelling. Ingredion's own research shows citrus fibres continue to grow in popularity as an ingredient option among consumers, with 85 percent globally claiming they accept and like them on their label.

Additionally, our consumer research on texture shows that 60% of consumers like multi-sensory experiences, while 79% believe texture determines overall satisfaction.

Reducing or replacing ingredients that are high in fat, salt and sugar content is now more accessible than ever before. Many clean label products support diets or lifestyles, and research shows that consumers are willing to pay more for goods which support their wellbeing goals.

Notably, 14% of consumers are willing to pay up to 30% more for sugar-related claims such as "no added sugar" or "reduced sugar," highlighting the value of health-forward positioning. Data from Ingredion Proprietary Consumer Research in 2025, shows that in the Middle East and Africa region, 92 per cent of consumers would be willing to pay more for products displaying 'all natural' claims. Clean label claims clearly resonate with consumers.

Simple, transparent labelling can also prove effective in building brand confidence and product loyalty. By clearly communicating familiar ingredients, brands can strengthen trust and differentiate themselves in a crowded market.

Adding product value

While consumers are now shopping and selecting products based on a better understanding of nutrition, health and wellness, they also have expectations when it comes to taste and texture. Ingredient solution specialists can guide brands and support them in meeting consumer expectations while still delivering enjoyable eating experiences.

Reformulation to clean label ingredients offers extra value that consumers feel is worth paying for, boosting brand loyalty, supporting business growth and meeting the expectations of FOP labelling.

Overcoming operational and technical hurdles

And there's more good news for consumer brands - there is help available to navigate the challenges of meeting evolving regulations and customer expectations while protecting well-loved brands.

Collaboration can enable brands to get to market faster by opening access to technical expertise and science-backed ingredient solutions. Applying this knowledge and consumer insight to business objectives, whether it be prioritising specific claims and benefits, tailoring product messaging, or realigning brand positioning, can drive gains in revenue, margin and pricing.

In addition to meeting regulatory needs, many clean label ingredients now support process tolerance, shelf stability and cost-in-use targets. A clean label strategy can also enhance brand loyalty and positive brand reputation, opening new audiences and opportunities to increase overall revenue.

Tapping into proprietary data, such as the latest Ingredion proprietary study which has been collated in a new e-book, brands can identify ingredients that will create differentiated products as well as cost-stability solutions to help protect margins against supply uncertainty.

Looking forward to success

Clean label reformulation delivers the products consumers want and a solution to the introduction of front-of-pack nutrition labels in the Middle East and Africa. On-pack messaging is a go-to source for consumers who are keen to know about the health and nutritional value of a product.

Acting now by working proactively to meet changing regulations and labelling requirements can unlock a greater potential for food and beverage brands.

www.ingredion.com

Reformulate, re-price or retreat: South Africa's snacks and confectionery sector is facing a strategic reset

South Africa's snacks and confectionery industry is entering a decisive reset—one that will reshape portfolios, capital allocation, and competitive positioning over the next three to five years. For brands and formulators the challenge is no longer about incremental innovation. It is about making hard, near-term decisions in response to a market that is tightening structurally from both the top down and the bottom up.

At the top, regulation is accelerating. At the bottom, consumers are fragmenting along stark economic lines. In between, margins are being squeezed by input costs, energy instability, and the rising complexity of doing business in a reformulation-driven environment. The result is a category that will look materially different by the end of the decade.

The most immediate disruptor is regulation. Proposed front-of-pack (FOP) warning labels targeting products high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat will fundamentally alter the economics of the category. These are not subtle nutritional guides—they are designed to be highly visible, easily understood, and behaviour-changing. For brands built on impulse purchase and emotional connection, the introduction of warning icons is effectively a form of on-pack de-marketing.

The implications are significant. Products that exceed nutrient thresholds will not only carry reputational risk at shelf but may also face tightening restrictions on advertising—particularly to children. More importantly, retailers are unlikely to remain passive. As seen in other markets, formal retail is expected to move ahead of regulation, rationalising shelf space toward compliant or lower-risk products and accelerating the shift toward private label alternatives that can be reformulated faster and priced more aggressively.

For brands this raises a critical question: which parts of the current portfolio remain viable under a high-probability regulatory scenario? In practical terms, this means confronting the likelihood that a meaningful share of today's high-sugar and high-salt SKUs will either require reformulation, repositioning, or eventual exit.

Reformulation, however, is neither simple nor cheap. Sugar and salt are foundational to product structure, not just taste. Reducing them impacts texture, shelf life, and consumer acceptance. The technical challenge is compounded by cost: alternative sweeteners, flavour systems, and functional ingredients typically carry a premium, while also introducing formulation risk. In a price-sensitive market, passing these costs on is not always feasible.

This is where the South African context becomes critical. The snacks and confectionery market is not a single consumer story—it is a dual-speed economy. On one end, a growing segment of urban, higher-income consumers is driving demand for "permissible indulgence": lower sugar, baked rather than fried, portion-controlled, and functionally enhanced products. On the other, the majority of volume remains firmly price-led, particularly in informal retail channels where affordability dictates choice and brand loyalty is secondary to value.

This divergence creates tension. The same regulatory framework applies across both segments, yet the ability to absorb reformulation costs does not. Manufacturers are therefore being forced into a dual strategy: defending volume in the value segment through cost engineering and pack-size innovation, while simultaneously investing in compliant, higher-margin products for the premium end of the market.

The operational implications of this shift are profound. SKU complexity is increasing, production runs are shortening, and the traditional high-volume manufacturing model is under pressure. Flexibility is becoming as important as scale. Facilities designed for long, stable production cycles must now accommodate rapid changeovers, smaller batches, and more diverse ingredient systems.

Three investment areas are emerging as critical. First, reformulation capability: systems that enable sugar and salt reduction without compromising product integrity. This includes advanced mixing, dosing, and ingredient handling technologies that can manage more complex formulations. Second, processing shifts—particularly the move from frying to baking, supported by continuous oven systems that reduce fat content while maintaining texture. Third, precision seasoning and coating technologies that improve flavour delivery efficiency, allowing for lower sodium usage without sacrificing taste.

Delaying investment in these areas carries its own risk. As regulatory thresholds come into force, manufacturers without the necessary technical capability will find themselves constrained—not just in innovation, but in maintaining existing product lines. In effect, capex is becoming a prerequisite for staying in the game, not just for getting ahead.

Ingredient strategy is also moving up the executive agenda. The shift toward clean label formulations is gaining momentum, driven by both regulatory scrutiny and consumer awareness. Artificial colours and additives are increasingly under pressure, pushing manufacturers toward natural alternatives derived from plant-based sources. While these ingredients align with future market expectations, they introduce additional cost and supply chain complexity—further reinforcing the need for strategic sourcing and formulation expertise.

Flavour, however, remains a critical lever—and one of the few areas where differentiation can still be achieved without significant structural cost increases. South African consumers continue to favour bold, familiar profiles, but there is growing appetite for hybrid flavours and localised innovation. Products that successfully combine cultural relevance with novelty are more likely to win, particularly in a crowded and increasingly competitive shelf environment.

Overlaying all of this is the reality of operating in South Africa: persistent energy instability, logistics inefficiencies, and input cost volatility. Load shedding alone has added a cost layer to manufacturing, forcing investment in backup power and reducing overall plant efficiency. In a market where margins are already under pressure, these factors amplify the financial impact of regulatory and consumer-driven change.

The snacks and confectionery sector is moving from a relatively stable, volume-driven model to a far more complex, margin-sensitive, and capability-dependent environment. The winners will not be those who innovate the most, but those who make the most disciplined strategic choices.

South Africa's snacks and confectionery industry is not in decline—but it is being redefined. In this new environment, indulgence must be engineered, not assumed. And for those unwilling or unable to adapt, the market will not stand still long enough to wait.

World Vanilla Day: Celebrating the world's most loved flavour

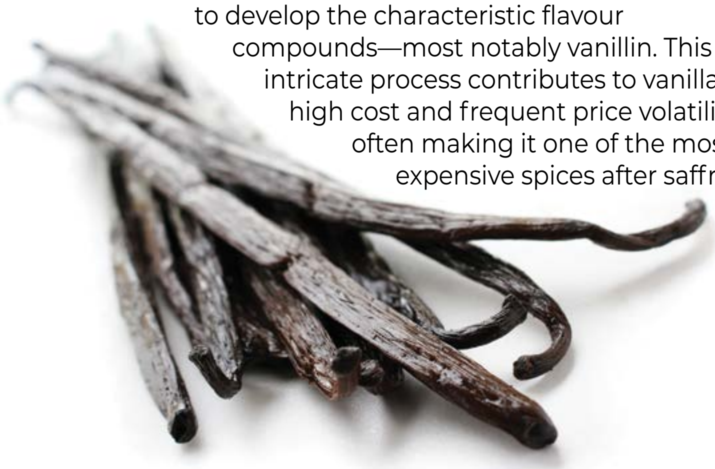
World Vanilla Day, celebrated on 10 April honours one of the most iconic and widely used flavouring ingredients in the global food and beverage industry. Despite its familiar, comforting taste, vanilla has a complex history, a fragile supply chain, and a uniquely labour-intensive production process that elevates it to one of the most prized ingredients in manufacturing.

Vanilla originates from the tropical orchid Vanilla planifolia, first cultivated by the Totonac people of present-day Mexico. The ingredient gained global prominence after the Spanish encountered it in the 16th century and introduced it to Europe, where it quickly became associated with luxury and indulgence. Today, vanilla is no longer a niche spice—it is the backbone of countless products, from ice cream and baked goods to beverages, dairy, and even savoury applications.

Modern vanilla production is concentrated in a handful of equatorial regions, with Madagascar dominating global supply, alongside countries such as Indonesia, Uganda, and Papua New Guinea.

Madagascar alone accounts for approximately 70–80% of the world's natural vanilla output, making the market highly vulnerable to regional disruptions. Cyclones, political instability, and fluctuating labour conditions can significantly impact supply volumes and pricing.

One of the defining characteristics of vanilla is its labour-intensive cultivation. Each orchid flower must be hand-pollinated within a narrow window of time, a process that cannot be easily mechanised. After harvesting, the green pods undergo a lengthy curing process that can take several months, involving blanching, sweating, drying, and conditioning to develop the characteristic flavour compounds—most notably vanillin. This intricate process contributes to vanilla's high cost and frequent price volatility, often making it one of the most expensive spices after saffron.



For food and beverage manufacturers, vanilla presents both an opportunity and a challenge. On one hand, it is a universally appealing flavour that enhances sweetness perception, rounds out formulations, and masks undesirable notes in plant-based or functional products. Its versatility makes it indispensable across categories, from premium desserts to protein beverages and nutraceuticals.

On the other hand, the instability of natural vanilla supply has driven widespread use of synthetic vanillin, which offers cost efficiency and consistency. However, growing consumer demand for clean label, natural ingredients is shifting the balance back toward authentic vanilla, placing pressure on manufacturers to secure reliable sourcing strategies. This has led to increased investment in traceability, sustainability programmes, and long-term partnerships with farming communities.

Sustainability is now a critical focus within the vanilla sector. Ethical sourcing initiatives aim to improve farmer livelihoods, reduce deforestation, and stabilise supply chains. For manufacturers, supporting these initiatives is not only a reputational advantage but a strategic necessity to ensure long-term ingredient security.

Ultimately, vanilla's enduring appeal lies in its ability to deliver both familiarity and sophistication. On World Vanilla Day, it is worth recognising that behind this seemingly simple flavour lies a highly complex, global ecosystem—one that requires careful stewardship to meet the evolving demands of the food and beverage industry.

Symrise celebrates third World Vanilla Day with global activities

Symrise brought the diversity of vanilla to life on World Vanilla Day. Local and global activities along with internal and external formats created opportunities for connection, exchange and new perspectives.

World Vanilla Day on April 10, 2026, puts the world's most popular sweet flavour and warm scent in the spotlight. Symrise's founding fathers helped lay a cornerstone of today's flavour and fragrance industry when they became the first to synthesise vanillin fromconiferin. Now, 152 years later, Symrise invites people to rediscover vanilla as culturalheritage, as a valuable raw material and as inspiration for innovative solutions in food and beverages, fine fragrances and personal care.

With a special focus on Holzminden, the historic birthplace of vanillin synthesis. Symrise, together with Sensoria, the House of Fragrances and Flavors, offered activities for the public, including children's workshops, fragrance and vanilla presentations, and culinary tastings that brought vanilla to life through all the senses. Additional activities in the city center invited people to take part and strengthen the connection between the company and the region.

Vanilla plays a key role in Symrise's two segments: Food & Beverage and Scent & Care.

World Vanilla Day reflects the ONE Symrise approach through a global virtual event, bringing together experts from many functions and showcasing how vanilla inspires innovation from sensory profiles to application-focused concepts.

"Vanilla means more than taste and scent to Symrise. It forms part of our DNA. World Vanilla Day brings us together worldwide in the spirit of ONE Symrise and adds momentum to our ambition: to create added value for our customers while rethinking vanilla sustainably. The fact that we are celebrated at more than 25 locations this year shows the enthusiasm vanilla sparks at Symrise," said Laurent Deniau, Global Competence Director Vanilla.

Vanilla as inspiration for tomorrow

With World Vanilla Day, Symrise is making knowledge accessible, raising awareness of responsibility and inviting dialogue. Growing interest in the day underscores how vanilla connects companies, countries and generations.

www.symrise.com

Ishida Europe to highlight latest innovations at SNACKEX 2026



Leading food packaging solutions provider Ishida Europe (Ishida) will return to SNACKEX in Lisbon, Portugal, to showcase its latest innovations in weighing, packing and quality control.


Exhibiting alongside its industrial food equipment partner, Heat and Control, Ishida will demonstrate how its latest CCW-AS multihead weigher, INSPIRA Rotary Bagmaker, compact Auto Splice solution and TSC-AS inline seal tester can help snack manufacturers boost speed, quality and overall line efficiency.

Taking place between 17 and 18 June 2026 the highlight of Ishida's exhibition will be its flagship multihead weigher, the CCW AS. Engineered for fast, accurate weighing to accelerate production lines, the CCW-AS builds on 50 years of combination weighing expertise, and introduces advances in automation, precision, consistency and efficiency.

With its innovative automated machinery, Ishida is supporting snack manufacturers as they face growing pressure to deliver higher quality snacks at greater speed and with fewer resources. The CCW AS automatically adjusts hopper opening and closing profiles, enhancing product flow, weighing efficiency and reducing downtime. A new feed system moves product faster and more precisely, including sticky snacks, to support higher throughput. An enhanced motor drive also helps lower energy use and running costs.

Ishida will also demonstrate its new, compact Auto Splice model on the stand. Customers can now choose between two models depending on their needs: the fully automatic Auto Splice, requiring minimal operator input, and the Compact Auto Splice, a cost effective, space-saving solution. Both models deliver near continuous film feed through faster reel changes and reduced risk of operator errors, resulting in increased uptime and safer operations.

Andrew Green, Business Unit Manager Snacks Packaging at Ishida Europe, said: "As the only international trade show dedicated exclusively to savoury snacks, SNACKEX is a great opportunity for the industry to come together and share the latest developments in snack manufacturing and packing.

"We will demonstrate how Ishida's innovations support snack producers at every stage of the line, from accurate weighing and consistent quality bagmaking to rigorous seal testing and quality control.

"Our goal is to help manufacturers boost efficiency, reduce cost and waste and to deliver the high quality products consumers expect, and we are looking forward to showing how our technologies deliver these benefits." Ishida Europe will exhibit at Pavilion 4, Stand 401 at SNACKEX 2026.

www.ishidaeurope.com/en

SIAL Paris 2026: The event that sheds light on and accelerates the global food business

SIAL Paris will return to Paris Nord Villepinte from 17 to 21 October 2026. The 2026 edition is set to be the most ambitious in the show's history, surpassing an already record-breaking 2024 event and further cementing its status as the global leader of the food industry.

A true global benchmark for food industry professionals, SIAL Paris once again positions itself as a powerful business accelerator, an unparalleled showcase for major innovations and a strategic observatory of the trends shaping the future of food worldwide. With 85% of exhibition space already booked, up to 8,000 exhibitors expected, 295,000 professionals and more than 280,000 m² of exhibition space spanning 10 key sectors, SIAL Paris 2026 confirms not only its exceptional international reach, but also the renewed confidence and long-term commitment of companies across the entire food value chain.

- **Up to 8,000 exhibitors expected**
- **295,000 professionals**
- **85% of exhibition space already booked**
- **+16% exhibition space sold vs. previous edition at the same stage**
- **More than 650 startups, including 150 within SIAL Start-up**

A strong commercial dynamic and a highly international show

Six months ahead of opening, SIAL Paris 2026 is posting particularly strong commercial indicators. Already, more than 260,000 m² of exhibition space has been sold, representing an increase of +16% compared with the previous edition at the same stage. Several sectors are already close to capacity, including grocery products, fine food, meat, poultry, delicatessen, cereals, pulses, fruit and vegetables.

At the same time, other universes – such as multi-product grocery, sweet goods, frozen products and beverages – are showing strong recruitment momentum, contributing to a renewed and diversified offer. Italy, Spain, Türkiye, Greece and France currently form the Top 5 exhibiting countries, reflecting the strong mobilisation of major European exporting nations.

Innovation at the heart of strategy

In 2026, SIAL Paris is more determined than ever to place innovation at the core of its strategy. SIAL Innovation, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary, is reinventing itself with a new design and an enriched experience. It now fully integrates SIAL Taste, placing tasting at the heart of the innovation journey and offering visitors the opportunity to see, understand and experience the food of tomorrow.

More than 650 startups are expected at the show, including around 150 gathered within the SIAL Start-up area, highlighting emerging projects that are transforming the food industry. A dedicated Startup Pitch stage will give young South African companies increased visibility and direct access to investors, buyers and partners.

SIAL Paris 2026
There is still time to register! Companies wishing to participate in the next edition of SIAL Paris can find all the necessary information on this page: https://www.sialparis.com/en/pratical-info/contact

Inspiration, insight and thought leadership

Beyond business, SIAL Paris stands as the world's largest food industry trade show and the leading international platform to discover, experience and understand innovation across the sector. A true global benchmark, it brings together the entire agri-food ecosystem to shape the future of food on an international scale.

As a major hub for inspiration and forward-thinking dialogue, SIAL Paris brings together international experts, researchers, executives and decision-makers through SIAL Summit and SIAL Talks to decode market transformations, challenge existing models and anticipate the future of the industry.

Key topics include:

- The food systems needed for 2030, addressing food sovereignty, climate change and sustainable value chains
- Data, traceability and artificial intelligence redefining agri-food systems
- New consumer expectations, from health and pleasure to ultra-personalisation and emerging consumption habits

SIAL for Change further reinforces this leadership by dedicating space to CSR initiatives, spotlighting responsible innovation through the SIAL for Change competition, promoting sustainable practices and fostering talent development via SIAL Jobs, confirming SIAL's role as the driving force behind the evolution of the global food industry.

Key trends driving the global food industry

As part of its intersession dynamic, SIAL Paris continues to provide forward-looking analysis between editions through SIAL Insights, a dedicated trend platform designed to help professionals understand, anticipate and transform the future of food.

SIAL Paris hosted a SIAL Insights talkshow bringing together leading industry experts — Karin Perrot (Kantar), Xavier Terlet (ProtéinesXTC), Maria Bertoch and Emily Mayer (Circana), alongside Audrey Ashworth (SIAL Paris) — to decode the major structural transformations reshaping the global food ecosystem.

The session highlighted seven key intersession trends shaping 2026–2027:

1. A new era of innovation and differentiation
Private labels are now innovating at the same pace as brands, raising the bar for differentiation. Artificial intelligence is becoming a powerful tool to

analyse insights, optimise launches and accelerate relevance — provided it remains grounded in real consumer usage.

2. The rise of functional health and "GLP-1 companion" products
Health is shifting towards targeted functional benefits — digestion, immunity, energy, cognition and women's health — alongside the emergence of new product segments adapted to GLP-1 treatment users, with controlled portions and tailored nutritional profiles.

3. The boom of snacking and fragmented consumption moments
Traditional lunch occasions are slightly declining, while breakfast, afternoon breaks and on-the-go snacking are growing, fuelled by remote work and convenience-driven lifestyles. Snacking is becoming increasingly premiumised and diversified.

4. Retail as a key driver of ready-to-eat growth
Retail is emerging as a major force in the "on-the-go" segment, expanding fresh, portioned and convenient offerings. Retail snacking is growing twice as fast as food service, supported by strong in-store innovation dynamics.

5. Demographic shifts reshaping demand
Ageing populations, smaller households and remote work are redefining expectations. Smaller formats, easier-to-open packaging and individualised consumption solutions are becoming strategic priorities.

6. The visibility challenge in-store and online
86% of innovations go unnoticed on shelves, making execution critical. Clear packaging, strong signage and immediate recognition are essential — even more so in e-commerce environments where innovation visibility is lower.

7. Winning innovation drivers for 2026–2027
Successful products will combine pleasure, functional health, practicality, sustainability and price accessibility. Differentiation, test-and-learn strategies and precise execution — enhanced by AI as a relevance accelerator — will define success.

Through SIAL Insights, SIAL Paris strengthens its role as a strategic observatory of global food transformation, ensuring that professionals arrive at the 2026 edition equipped with forward-thinking perspectives and actionable intelligence.

▸ Watch the full SIAL Insights talkshow here: https://www.sialparis.com/en/sial-insights

An enhanced business experience

Designed as a living, experiential show, SIAL Paris combines business efficiency with conviviality. In 2026, the event will introduce an AI-powered matchmaking platform to facilitate targeted meetings between exhibitors and buyers. This will be complemented by a new Meet & Match area, an enhanced Business Lounge and speed-meeting sessions to maximise concrete business opportunities.

South African visitors will also be able to take part in sector-specific or themed SIAL Guided Tours, led by expert partners, to explore targeted aspects of the show.

"SIAL Paris 2026 will showcase an innovation that is committed, aware and focused on concrete solutions – an innovation capable of nurturing ideas, accelerating transitions and turning challenges into opportunities for the entire food industry," Audrey Ashworth, Director of SIAL Paris.

www.sial.com

Heat and Control at Interpack 2026

Dusseldorf, Germany — May 2026 — As food manufacturers face mounting pressure to cut energy and water use while maintaining throughput, quality and consistency, Interpack 2026 will put process performance firmly in the spotlight. Heat and Control will return to the global trade fair with a clear focus on helping food manufacturers optimise every stage of production through smarter, more efficient processing and packaging solutions.

At this year's show, Heat and Control will showcase new and recently launched technologies across food processing, conveying, seasoning, weighing, packaging and inspection. The solutions are designed to tackle rising energy costs, water management and increasing performance expectations on the production floor, while supporting a wide range of applications like French fries and potato co-products, snacks, prepared foods and more.

Heat and Control will introduce the FastBack® Symphony On-Machine Seasoning System (OMS), a recently launched solution developed to simplify seasoning processes and deliver greater accuracy in high-speed production environments.

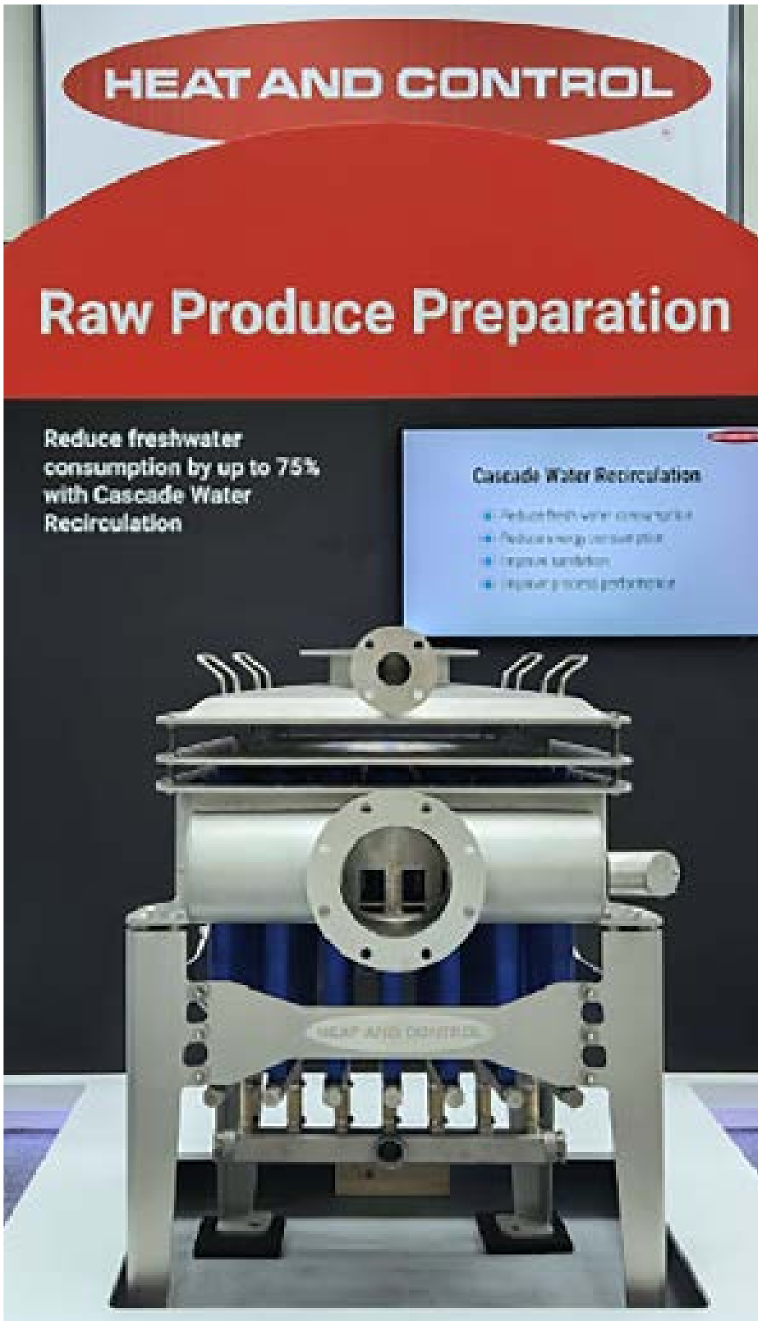
According to the company, Symphony OMS represents a significant step forward in on-machine seasoning performance.

"Seasoning is one of the most critical and challenging stages in snack production," says Blake Svejkovsky, General Manager, Product Handling Systems at Heat and Control.

"With Symphony OMS, we set out to address the real-world issues processors face every day, including airborne seasoning, inconsistent coverage and sanitation demands. This is the most accurate on-machine seasoning system we've ever developed, and it is engineered to perform at higher line speeds and application rates."

Heat and Control will also highlight its Cascade Water Recirculation Systems, reflecting the company's long-term focus on sustainability and water efficiency in food manufacturing.

Developed through extensive research and development, the advanced water management systems are designed to help processors reduce freshwater consumption while maintaining sanitation and process performance.



Heat and Control's new cascade water recirculation systems are set to revolutionise water conservation in processing systems

"Food manufacturers face growing pressure to operate with less — less energy, less water, less waste," says Rick Bajema, Director of Processing Innovations at Heat and Control.

"Our Cascade Water Recirculation Systems give them practical tools to conserve, treat and reuse water more effectively. Technologies such as our Slice Wash Support Module (SWSM) and Pre-Rinse Support Module (PRSM) significantly reduce water usage without compromising food safety or equipment performance."

Originally developed for potato chip applications, these systems are now being applied to French fry production and other raw materials processes. The SWSM removes up to 90 percent of starch from slice washer water, helping reduce freshwater use and debris entering fryers. The PRSM removes larger particles from peeler and washer systems, minimising the amount of external water turnover required.

"Heat and Control will introduce the FastBack® Symphony On-Machine Seasoning System, a recently launched solution developed to simplify seasoning processes and deliver greater accuracy in high-speed production environments"

In addition, Heat and Control will highlight two thermal processing solutions from recently acquired company Tek-Dry, including a French Fry Dryer and a Snack Dryer, both designed for high-throughput operations.

Tek-Dry French Fry Dryers use a hallmark, single-pass design to deliver consistent drying within a compact footprint, supporting high evaporation rates and precise moisture control while reducing product agitation and fines. The Snack Dryers utilise the same single-pass approach across a wide range of snack products, including croutons, expanded snacks and bread-based applications, with flexible heating options to suit different production requirements.

Featured technology at Interpack 2026

- FastBack Symphony On-Machine Seasoning System
- Cascade Water Recirculation Systems (SWSM & PRSM)
- Tek-Dry French Fry Dryer and Snack Dryer
- Fabcon Vibratory Conveyor

At the Heat and Control booth, visitors can also explore a dedicated product showcase designed to bring real-world applications to life. The interactive display will feature a range of products commonly processed by Heat and Control customers, allowing visitors to discover the technologies and solutions best suited to each application. Visitors are invited to meet the team, view daily live demonstrations, and discuss solutions tailored to their specific products, applications and processing needs. Find Heat and Control at Interpack 2026 in Hall 14, Stand 14A56.

www.heatandcontrol.com

TNA to preview next-generation confectionery innovations at interpack 2026

TNA Solutions will showcase how confectionery manufacturers can simplify increasingly complex production environments while improving throughput, consistency and efficiency, under the theme 'innovation simplified'.

As a complete confectionery line solutions partner, TNA is enabling producers to do more with less by reducing waste, minimising manual intervention with its inherent risks and maximising equipment availability across the entire line.

With manufacturers facing growing SKU complexity, labour shortages and rising operational costs, TNA's upcoming mogul enhancements are designed to boost productivity, enable faster changeovers and improve process control. Delivering reliable outputs of over 3,000 kg per hour, these innovations maximise throughput and product quality while reducing waste and improving overall equipment effectiveness (OEE). They are particularly suited to jelly, gummy, marshmallows and liquorice applications, where precision and flexibility are critical.

Driving efficiency through smarter starch handling

TNA is redefining starch tray filling — traditionally one of the most critical operations for ensuring high-quality mould printing and uniform starch dispersion. A new spring-loaded seal mechanism, integrated within a patented starch filling containment system, creates a controlled environment during filling, levelling and transport, preventing overflow at tray edges and eliminating the need for further compressed air cleaning.

This results in cleaner trays, more consistent stacking, reduced airborne starch dust, lower material loss and reduced energy consumption.

"A new spring-loaded seal mechanism, integrated within a patented starch filling containment system, creates a controlled environment during filling, levelling and transport, preventing overflow at tray edges and eliminating the need for further compressed air cleaning"

Real-time weight control to lower waste

To address the challenge of weight accuracy in increasingly complex confectionery formats — from layered and centre-filled products to premium textures — TNA has developed an in-line tray weighing system that measures product weight before and after depositing. The system allows the mogul to self-adjust the pump stroke dynamically during production, ensuring consistent weight control across every batch.

This continuous monitoring approach reduces product giveaway, minimises waste and enables early rejection of out-of-spec trays, protecting yield and product quality.

Faster changeovers to maximise uptime

TNA's clean-in-place (CIP) hoppers and remote-controlled hopper compartment valves significantly reduce changeover time, minimise machine and factory contamination and improve operator safety.

In addition, TNA's latest piston valve design simplifies the changeover process, reducing it by approximately five minutes per change. For operations performing multiple changeovers per day, this translates into a meaningful increase in available production time and overall line productivity.

Advanced pump design for greater control and reliability

TNA's new top-driven pump architecture improves both performance and usability. Uniform piston stroke across the pump array ensures consistent weight control, while optional servo-driven valve bar technology enhances depositing precision across a wide range of formulations.

Additional features, including hopper overflow drainage, reduce cleaning requirements and unplanned downtime, improving overall reliability.

Commenting on the innovations, Luca Menassi, General Manager – Asia, TNA Solutions, said: "Confectionery manufacturers today are under pressure to deliver greater flexibility, higher efficiency and consistent product quality — often with fewer resources. Our focus is on simplifying operations through intelligent design, automation and integration. By reducing manual intervention, enabling faster changeovers and providing real-time control over critical processes such as weight accuracy, we help producers improve performance across the entire line while maintaining the highest quality standards."

TNA Solutions, Hall 14, Stands C56 & D56, from 7–13 May in Düsseldorf, Ge

www.tna.com

New inkjet printer series at Interpack 2026

Linx Printing Technologies will introduce a new continuous inkjet (CIJ) printer range at Interpack 2026, taking place in Düsseldorf, Germany. The launch will be a central focus at the company's
nd (C59, Hall 8B), highlighting advancements in coding and marking solutions for high-volume production environments.

The new CIJ printer series expands Linx's portfolio of industrial coding technologies, which includes laser coders, thermal transfer printers and large character marking systems. These solutions

are designed to improve operational efficiency, support traceability compliance and reduce downtime across manufacturing and packaging lines.

For South Africa's food and beverage manufacturing sector, where regulatory compliance, batch traceability and production uptime are critical, the introduction of next-generation CIJ printers offers potential benefits in high-speed coding, reliability and ease of integration into existing production lines.

Linx will also preview a new large character marking printer, engineered for coding onto porous substrates such as cardboard and paper. This is particularly relevant for secondary packaging applications in logistics and distribution.

Additional technologies on display include laser coding systems such as the UVG5 for delicate films and plastics, the CSL30 for glass and rubber, and the FSL20 fibre laser for high-resolution marking of small components. Thermal transfer printers for flexible packaging applications will also be showcased.

These developments reinforce Linx's focus on coding and marking systems that address evolving production demands in the global and South African food and beverage industry.

www.linxglobal.com

A new era for strategic water treatment as Xylem launches DAF Solutions in South Africa

Xylem, a global water technology company focused on solving complex water challenges, launched its new Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) products and services for the South African market.

In an event hosted at Xylem Africa's headquarters in Kempton Park, Johannesburg, the company unveiled its DAF equipment and services, delivering reliable wastewater treatment to key sectors such as mining, municipalities, agriculture, aquaculture, food & beverage, paper & pulp, chemical manufacturers, and pharmaceutical companies.

DAF is a critical pre-treatment and solids-separation system within broader wastewater treatment system. It can operate as a standalone solids-separation step or complement downstream biological, filtration, or reuse systems to help achieve site-specific compliance and reuse objectives. The compact and modular design enables deployment in constricted and crowded sites. Xylem also provides excellent DAF rental options that support smaller and seasonal projects.

"We are very excited to bring cutting-edge DAF solutions to our local customers. Xylem has introduced our DAF solutions to several other markets, where they have become a big hit among companies of various sizes. They appreciate the logistical benefits of DAF's compact designs and convenient deployment, supported by our expert technicians. South African organisations in the private and public sectors can now also leverage DAF to expand their choices for water treatment and recycling," says Chetan Mistry, Strategy and Marketing Manager at Xylem WSS.

“DAF uses microscopic air bubbles to separate suspended solids and associated contaminants, supporting material recovery, water recycling, and regulatory compliance when integrated into appropriate treatment trains”

What is DAF?

Xylem’s DAF systems use Hellbender™ pumps to release microscopic air bubbles that, following appropriate coagulation and flocculation, attach to suspended and destabilised colloidal particles, enabling their separation from the water phase which can be skimmed away.

The DAF technique efficiently removes Total Suspended Solids (TSS), Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOG), and particulate-associated biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) from wastewater streams. These systems offer an effective solution for a wide range of applications, including:

- Thickening of biosolids
- Product recovery from wastewater
- Treatment of industrial wastewater to meet site discharge limits
- Polishing of biological treatment effluent (algae and phosphorus removal)
- Pretreatment to reduce loading on downstream biological treatment systems
- Clarification of biosolids downstream of aerobic and anaerobic treatment
- Removal of fats, oils, and greases (FOG)
- Temporary treatment of biosolids during harvest seasons
- Removal of metals and fines
- Recovery of proteins from slaughterhouse wastewater

DAF systems are also remarkably compact, often requiring significantly less footprint and depth than conventional sedimentation tanks, depending on design and loading rates. Its combination of convenient sizes and broad applications makes it attractive to numerous industries that clean water for reuse, extract materials from water, or prepare water for compliant discharge into the environment.

Bringing DAF's advantages to Africa

Xylem's DAF solutions and services enable more producers to manage wastewater strategically without excessive investment in wastewater infrastructure.

As part of a phased and modular treatment strategy, DAF is often deployed as an entry point into integrated wastewater and reuse solutions, enabling future expansion with biological treatment, filtration, and advanced polishing technologies.

Xylem's DAF units provide efficient wastewater pre-treatment and solids separation with:

- Three DAF models: RT-50, RT-100, RT-240 (100-1000 GPM flows)
- Durable stainless-steel construction
- Integrated flocculation tube for enhanced separation
- Pre-wired control panel for quick setup
- Continuous support throughout rental terms
- Simple operation following site integration, safety review, and commissioning (connection to process lines and 460VAC power required)

From running pilots and proofs of concepts for wastewater management plans, to enhancing the efficiency of established treatment systems, and upgrading to cutting-edge treatment methodologies: Xylem Africa and DAF help South African industries and municipalities solve water for all.

Xylem Africa and its partners deliver permanent and rental DAF solutions, calibrated to a customer's requirements and operations, says Mistry.

"Xylem's expert staff and our experienced partners customise each solution as required. We deliver and manage components such as mixer tanks, weir tanks, pumps, and conveyors, as well as catwalks and accessories. Our skilled technicians can support on-site staff or run the process on behalf of our customers."

Water is humanity's most essential resource. As water stress and costs increase, organisations are intensifying their strategies to ensure supply and compliance. For many, though, this prospect was out of reach because of the cost and cumbersome ownership of industrialised water treatment options.

Backed by Xylem's engineering expertise and service capability, dissolved air flotation expands flexible, resilient options for wastewater pre-treatment and reuse within integrated water management strategies.

www.xylem.com/en-us/

Robust screw vacuum pump for industrial application that is compact, quiet, and clean

Atlas Copco developed the dry screw vacuum pump DHS 3000 VSD+ specifically for massive flow industrial applications. As dry technology, it is well suited for paper processing, conveying technologies, pick-and-place applications in the food industry, and as a central vacuum system.

Powered by a highly efficient IE4 motor with a patented asymmetrical rotor design, users benefit from energy savings of up to 50% compared to competitive products. The low-maintenance, compact vacuum pump has a pleasantly low noise level and runs vibration-free.

Lower energy consumption and component wear

An integrated, intelligent control system with frequency converter automatically adjusts the speed of the DHS 3000 VSD+ to the requirements, ensuring that the exact vacuum level required is delivered in each process section. This results in significantly lower energy consumption and reduced wear on all moving components. Overall, this also extends the maintenance intervals and service life of the vacuum pump. Companies that value stable performance and high process reliability and need to reduce their energy costs will find the dry-running pump a robust, clean solution.

No oil emissions or other contamination

A wear-free gearbox ensures optimum power transmission from the motor to the screw. "We have achieved a long service life for the gear wheels by using a cooled oil flow," explains Carol Pignatelli, Product Manager from Atlas Copco. Because the DHS 3000VSD+ does not use oil in any other way, there is no risk of oil emissions though carry over. "We have also equipped the DHS VSD+ with an air intake filter to protect operational process from dust and particles,"

Key advantages of the DHS 3000 VSD+ screw vacuum pump:

- Extremely efficient operation
- Intelligent process management
- Adaptation of flow to real demand – variable speed operation
- Compact footprint ensures quick and easy installation
- Paper filters protect against dust and particles
- Supplied as a complete plug-and-play unit
- Full service with preventive maintenance plan
- Robust construction minimises maintenance and system downtime

Carol Pignatelli continues. The oil-free technology and simple, robust design also contribute to low maintenance costs.2 (4)

Quiet, vibration-free operation

A range of ergonomic advantages and straightforward handling make the DHS 3000 VSD+ extremely user-friendly: under a noise-reducing hood, it runs pleasantly quietly and vibration-free. The easy-to-use Elektronikon® control system gives users a constant overview of the latest status updates on operating and downtimes, error and alarms.

"Atlas Copco supplies the DHS VSD+ as a complete plug-and-play unit that can be seamlessly and quickly integrated into any system," concludes Carol Pignatelli.

www.atlascopco.com

Ducona chooses Sidel's blower with Preferential Heating to expand into sauces

Ducona Holland BV (Ducona), a leading family-owned PET bottle manufacturer based in the Netherlands, strengthened its commitment to efficiency and sustainability by installing Sidel's SBO 8 EvoBLOW blower with Preferential Heating technology to produce flat PET containers for sauces.

Ducona's ongoing collaboration with Sidel reflects a shared dedication to sustainable growth and flexible, high-performance packaging. This last investment enabled Ducona to expand into the sauce market and further its focus on lightweight, energy-efficient packaging. The partnership between Ducona and Sidel spans more than three decades, with Sidel's expertise and innovative solutions supporting Ducona's evolution from its origins in 1991 producing bottles for Selchemie, to its current position as a leading PET packaging supplier."We are growing not only in volume but also in the variety of products and market segments, offering more added-value packaging for water, syrups, juices, smoothies and now sauces," said Gerben Schepers, CEO of Ducona.

The company's commitment to flexibility and rapid delivery, guaranteeing shipment within 48 hours, is underpinned by its investment in state-of-the-art equipment, a need consistently met by Sidel's advanced technologies.

Preferential Heating technology for flat containers superior quality

Ducona investment in Sidel's SBO 8 EvoBLOW with Preferential Heating marked a turning point in its production capabilities. The new equipment enabled the manufacture of 16,000 bottles per hour and delivered substantial PET savings, reducing packaging weight by up to ten percent.

This technology proved especially valuable for producing complex, shaped containers for sauces, allowing Ducona to achieve superior packaging quality at higher speed. "The Sidel Preferential Heating technology provides much better quality for the top-

"The Sidel blower also helps the company to overcome challenges such as sustainable operations processing recycled PET (rPET) accounting for eighty percent of its total volume and lightweighting packaging"

down flat bottles at a competitive cost compared with the traditional blowing process".

The Sidel blower also helps the company to overcome challenges such as sustainable operations processing recycled PET (rPET) accounting for eighty percent of its total volume and lightweighting packaging. To match its sustainable ambition, Ducona is also supplying over thirty percent of the company's energy needs with 8,800 solar panels. addressing the constraint of limited electricity availability in the Netherlands which makes energy-efficient solutions essential.

As Schepers explained: "Of course, we use recycled PET in a lot of our products. Depending on what the customer wants, we have from zero to hundred percent. If you produce rPET, the process window is more restrictive than if you blow virgin bottles. And with Sidel Preferential Heating process, we achieve superior packaging quality with a better bottle base's shape whatever the recycling rate. And we also have the double air recovery system to save energy which is very important for Ducona".

Sidel's advanced technology addresses all these distinct manufacturing needs, supporting Ducona's flexibility and rapid changeovers across more than 500 SKUs and over 300 million bottles produced annually. "With Sidel's quick-change technology, we can easily produce a wide variety of bottles within the expected delivery time," Schepers noted.

"The long-standing partnership with Sidel has been instrumental in Ducona's growth and ability to meet evolving market demands"

Long-standing partnership

The long-standing partnership with Sidel has been instrumental in Ducona's growth and ability to meet evolving market demands. Schepers recalled the importance of Sidel's early machines in improving bottle quality. He also highlighted the comprehensive support Sidel provides, from packaging design, testing, molds to operator training, counting on a turnkey supplier with everything in one hand.

Reflecting on the collaboration, Schepers concluded: "We are very satisfied with the new equipment, which offers higher output, better cost efficiency, improved quality, and packaging lightweighting that helps us gain market share."

www.sidel.com

Packaging REPORTER

Plastic is Fantastic expands global plastics dialogue

The Plastic is Fantastic Association (PiFA) is strengthening its global footprint through a targeted expansion into Asia, positioning itself as a platform for fact-based dialogue on plastics in key manufacturing markets. This development is relevant for stakeholders across the South African food and beverage packaging value chain, where demand for sustainable, high-performance plastics continues to grow.

PiFA has appointed Sandy Lin as Cluster Director for Asia, tasked with advancing regional strategy and partnerships. Lin, also Director of Global Business Development at Da Fon Environmental Technology, brings expertise in recycled polymers, including rHDPE and rPP, and their integration into industrial applications. Her appointment signals a focus on circular economy plastics, recycling infrastructure development, and scalable material innovation.

The association's expansion aligns with increasing global demand for sustainable food packaging solutions, recycled plastic materials for food and beverage applications, and transparent industry collaboration. Asia's role as a major plastics production and innovation hub makes it a strategic region for advancing these priorities.

PiFA formally presented its expanded structure at CHINAPLAS 2026 in Shanghai, one of the largest international plastics and rubber trade fairs. The event showcased developments in smart manufacturing, circular plastics systems, and advanced materials relevant to food-grade packaging and processing industries.

With established activity in North America and new operations in Asia, PiFA aims to support evidence-based decision-making across the plastics value chain. For South African manufacturers and suppliers, this global collaboration offers access to insights on recycling technologies, sustainable packaging trends, and regulatory-aligned material solutions.

www.pif-association.com

Zero waste to landfill certification

The Shoprite Group has achieved a Level 2 Zero Waste to Landfill certification at its Centurion Distribution Centre, the largest facility in its network at over 173,500 m^2. Issued by the Green Building Council of South Africa, the certification confirms that more than 90% of waste generated at the site is diverted from landfill, setting a benchmark for sustainable retail logistics in South Africa.

This milestone positions the facility as a leading example of zero waste to landfill certification in South Africa, with a structured waste management strategy aligned to best practice. The approach prioritises waste reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery across operations. Ordering systems are optimised to reduce waste volumes, while packaging materials are reused internally or redirected into secondary markets. Surplus food is redistributed through donation programmes, supporting food waste reduction in retail supply chains.

In the 2025 financial year, more than 31,931 tonnes of materials, including cardboard, plastics and metal, were processed through verified recycling partners. In addition, 6,469 tonnes of food waste were repurposed into animal feed, and over 1,652 tonnes were composted, supporting circular economy practices in the food and beverage sector. Less than 10% of residual waste is sent to landfill.

Reverse logistics further enhances efficiency, with delivery vehicles returning recyclable materials to the distribution centre. This supports sustainable supply chain management in South Africa while reducing empty loads.

The certification forms part of the Group's broader sustainability strategy.

www.shopriteholdings.co.za

New lightweight pot retains its versatility

Amcor has introduced a redesigned version of its UniPak 1 kg container, targeting efficiency gains for the dairy packaging sector in South Africa and broader B2B food and beverage markets. The updated lightweight dairy packaging solution reduces material usage while maintaining the structural integrity and operational compatibility required by high-volume production environments.

The new UniPak pot and lid have a combined weight of 31.6 g, delivering up to a nine percent reduction in carbon emissions based on projected manufacturing volumes. This positions the product as a viable option for manufacturers seeking sustainable dairy packaging solutions in South Africa without compromising performance.

Manufactured entirely from polypropylene, the container is recycle-ready packaging suitable for markets with established recycling infrastructure. Despite its reduced weight, the packaging retains durability across the supply chain, offering robust yoghurt packaging for bulk formats and maintaining product protection during transport and handling.

The compression-moulded lid provides liquid-tight sealing and strong top-load performance, while enhanced tamper-evidence supports food safety packaging compliance. The container remains secure even under pressure, addressing key concerns in high-performance food packaging solutions.

Designed for operational efficiency, UniPak supports in-mould labelling for dairy packaging, enabling brand differentiation across multiple formats including round, square, rectangular and oval designs. Standardised lid diameters simplify inventory management, while optimised pallet configuration improves logistics and reduces transport costs.

As demand for larger yoghurt formats increases, lightweight and sustainable plastic packaging for dairy products continues to be a strategic priority for manufacturers.

www.amcor.com

Boost recycling

South Africa's paper and fibre-based packaging sector is advancing efforts to improve recycling outcomes through a new Gauteng-focused initiative targeting liquid board packaging (LBP). Fibre Circle, the producer responsibility organisation, has launched a regional campaign aimed at increasing the collection and recycling of used beverage cartons while strengthening awareness across communities and the informal waste sector.

The recycling campaign for used beverage cartons in Gauteng forms part of broader extended producer responsibility (EPR) objectives, addressing low recovery rates of liquid board packaging such as milk cartons, juice cartons and long-life beverage packaging. Despite being fully recyclable, these materials are often diverted to landfills due to limited separation-at-source practices and low public awareness.

The initiative is being implemented in partnership with SMME buy-back centres, positioning these facilities as key collection points for recyclable beverage cartons. Participating sites include recyclers in Pretoria North, Diepsloot, Kempton Park, Soweto and South Johannesburg. These centres will facilitate community drop-offs, offer incentives for waste reclaimers and provide practical demonstrations on how to prepare cartons for recycling.

By integrating informal waste reclaimers into the value chain, the programme supports the development of the circular economy in South Africa while improving recycling collection rates for fibre-based packaging. The campaign also reinforces the role of buy-back centres as critical infrastructure in the recycling ecosystem.

Fibre Circle indicates that expanding access to collection hubs and incentivising participation will increase recovery volumes and reduce reliance on landfill.

www.fibrecircle.co.za

Gold Pack 2026 opens for entries

Entries are now open for Gold Pack 2026, a leading platform recognising packaging innovation in South Africa. The programme introduces important updates for participants across the food and beverage value chain, including converters, brand owners and packaging suppliers. The closing date for entries is now 30 June 2026, one month earlier than in previous years, requiring companies to accelerate submission timelines.

In a further development, the Gold Pack Awards Ceremony will take place in Cape Town on 29 October 2026, aligned with PROPAK Cape. This strategic move strengthens industry engagement by connecting the awards with one of the region's key packaging and processing trade exhibitions. For stakeholders in the South African food and beverage packaging industry, this alignment offers increased visibility and networking opportunities.

Gold Pack continues to serve as a benchmark for packaging excellence in South Africa, showcasing developments that respond to operational, regulatory and sustainability pressures. The awards programme evaluates entries as complete packaging solutions, rather than focusing solely on print quality. Judging criteria include structural design, branding, marketing effectiveness, production efficiency, supply chain performance and environmental impact. This comprehensive approach ensures relevance for food packaging manufacturers, retailers and FMCG brand owners.

The 2025 overall Gold Pack Trophy winner highlighted the industry's shift towards sustainable materials. Sack Force, in collaboration with Freshmark, a division of Shoprite Checkers, developed recyclable potato kraft bags that address a longstanding challenge in the local market. Conventional potato packaging often includes chemical treatments that limit recyclability. The winning solution used semi-extensible wet-strength sack kraft paper, maintaining durability while enabling recyclability within South Africa's waste streams. This innovation supports sustainable packaging solutions for food products and reduces landfill waste.

The outcome reinforces the role of collaboration between substrate suppliers, convertors and retailers in advancing recyclable packaging in South Africa. It also demonstrates how both new technologies and the effective application of existing materials can deliver measurable improvements in packaging performance.

Gold Pack Awards continue to recognise achievements across the full packaging lifecycle, supported by a judging panel with expertise spanning design, engineering, production and marketing. This multidisciplinary evaluation reflects the complexity of delivering commercially viable and compliant packaging in today's market.

Companies aiming to position themselves in innovative food and beverage packaging in South Africa are encouraged to participate. Entry details, guidelines and submission procedures are available on the website.

www.goldpack.org.za

Advancing fibre closures with plastic-like performance

PulPac is extending its Dry Molded Fiber technology into caps and closures, introducing a new generation of fibre-based caps aimed at reducing reliance on conventional plastic components. The innovation will be presented at interpack 2026, positioning the company at the forefront of sustainable packaging solutions for the global food and beverage sector, including the South African B2B market.

Caps and closures remain one of the most widely used packaging elements across beverages, dairy, sauces and condiments. As pressure increases on manufacturers to adopt sustainable packaging alternatives to plastic caps, PulPac's development targets a critical gap in the transition to fully recyclable fibre-based packaging systems.

The new caps are designed to replicate the functional performance of plastic closures while leveraging renewable fibre materials. Early-stage testing has demonstrated strong results in key technical areas such as thread engagement in fibre caps, opening and closing mechanics, sealing integrity, and user experience. These are essential criteria for food and beverage manufacturers seeking high-performance sustainable packaging solutions that meet both regulatory and consumer expectations.

A notable feature of the caps is their design flexibility. Manufacturers can differentiate internal and external surfaces, enabling custom branded fibre closures for beverage packaging while maintaining functional integrity. This opens opportunities for brand owners to enhance shelf presence without compromising sustainability targets.

The project is being developed in collaboration with PA Consulting and supported by PulPac's machine partner Optima. It also aligns with the Bottle Collective initiative, which focuses on developing fully fibre-based bottle and closure systems. This integrated approach is particularly relevant for South African producers looking to future-proof packaging strategies amid evolving environmental regulations and retailer requirements.

Pilot versions of the fibre caps have already undergone real-world testing as part of broader packaging evaluations. These trials indicate growing industry demand for plastic-free closure solutions in food and beverage packaging, especially in export-driven markets where sustainability compliance is increasingly non-negotiable.

As adoption accelerates, fibre-based closures could play a significant role in reducing plastic usage across high-volume product categories.

For South African food and beverage manufacturers, the development signals a shift toward scalable fibre packaging technologies that can integrate into existing production ecosystems. As adoption accelerates, fibre-based closures could play a significant role in reducing plastic usage across high-volume product categories.

www.pulpac.com

BMT's SMART prototyping approach reshapes bottle development

In the South African food and beverage manufacturing sector, pressure on packaging teams is increasing as brands balance speed to market, cost control and sustainability targets. For beverage producers and FMCG manufacturers, bottle development has become a critical point of risk, particularly when decisions are made before performance is fully validated. BMT, a strategic technology partner to the global packaging industry, is addressing this challenge through its SMART prototyping approach, designed to reduce tooling risk, compress development timelines and improve decision-making accuracy.

Conventional rapid prototyping in bottle development has focused primarily on speed. However, in today's market, speed without validation introduces downstream risk. Manufacturers require production-representative data early in the process to ensure that packaging designs meet performance, processing and material efficiency requirements before committing to high-cost tooling. This is particularly relevant in South Africa, where cost pressures, supply chain constraints and sustainability regulations continue to shape packaging strategies.

BMT's SMART prototyping platform combines virtual simulation, 3D-printed moulds and lab-scale stretch blow moulding (SBM) to deliver data-driven validation at an early stage. This integrated approach enables beverage manufacturers to simulate real production conditions and evaluate how bottle designs will perform at scale. By focusing on measurable parameters such as temperature, pressure and material distribution, SMART prototyping replaces trial-and-error methods with structured, data-led development.

At the core of this methodology is BMT's 'measure, digitise, execute' framework. This process captures detailed performance data during lab-scale trials, allowing engineers to optimise preform geometry, material selection and processing conditions before production tooling is commissioned. For South African beverage manufacturers exploring lightweight PET bottles, increased recycled PET (rPET) content or new packaging formats, this early-stage validation is essential to reduce risk and avoid costly redesigns.

The financial implications are significant. Global manufacturers using SMART prototyping have achieved up to 20% weight reduction in bottle designs within five days, while avoiding tooling rework costs of up to £150,000. Development timelines have also been reduced by as much as 70%, enabling faster product launches in competitive beverage categories such as carbonated drinks, bottled water and functional beverages.

A key differentiator in BMT's approach is its ability to bridge the gap between additive manufacturing and production reality. While 3D printing alone often fails to replicate industrial conditions, BMT integrates 3D-printed moulds into its BLOWSCAN lab-scale SBM platform. This allows bottles to be formed under controlled conditions that closely match full-scale production, delivering accurate geometry, material distribution and surface quality. These bottles can then be used for functional testing, filling trials and stakeholder evaluation.

This capability is particularly valuable for South African manufacturers developing complex or unconventional bottle designs. Asymmetric shapes, thick-walled structures and non-standard formats introduce additional processing challenges that are difficult to predict without physical validation. SMART prototyping enables teams to test these designs at lab scale, ensuring feasibility before committing to capital-intensive tooling.

As packaging innovation accelerates across the food and beverage sector, traditional tool-first development models are becoming less viable. Incomplete data at the decision stage often results in expensive modifications and delayed product launches. SMART prototyping provides a structured alternative, enabling manufacturers to validate concepts, materials and processes in a controlled environment.

For South African beverage producers seeking to reduce bottle development cost, improve packaging performance and accelerate time-to-market, BMT's SMART prototyping approach offers a practical route to more reliable outcomes. By replacing assumption-driven development with data-led validation, manufacturers can move forward with greater certainty and improved return on investment.

www.bmtglobal.com

Refill model gains ground in township stores

B-well has begun rolling out a flexible cooking-oil refill model in selected township stores as households continue to feel the strain of rising living costs.

With cooking-oil prices still around 4% higher year-on-year in February 2026, basic staples remain increasingly out of reach for many families. In response, the brand's new Smartfill initiative gives shoppers the ability to buy smaller, more affordable quantities.

A recent Southern Oil report shows that B-well cooking oil now accounts for 17.4% of refill-dispenser sales. While still in a pilot phase, this level of uptake suggests shoppers are not only open to the concept, but increasingly reliant on it.

"One of the key behaviours we're seeing is that around one in three shoppers ultimately buy a different brand at the dispenser than they intended," says Morne Botes, commercial director of Southern Oil. "This isn't always about brand switching - often it's a real-time decision based on budget and quantity. For a lot of families, buying a full bottle mid-month just isn't realistic, but buying half - or even less - is manageable."

The data points to repeat use as a standout indicator. Month-on-month growth in both sales and transactions suggests the refill model is becoming part of everyday shopping routines rather than a novelty. In busy township stores where customers frequently top up small essentials, the Smartfill approach aligns naturally with existing behavioural patterns.


Morne Botes

While affordability is the primary driver, the model also offers an environmental advantage: reduced single-use plastic. If scaled, the impact on plastic-waste reduction could be substantial.

"For B-well, this aligns with our broader efforts to support healthier, more sustainable food choices. Products like B-well Omega-3 cooking oil already reflect that direction, and Smartfill adds another dimension to it," says Botes.

AI is reshaping growth strategies

AI is redefining how consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies approach growth, innovation, and market access. New analysis from NielsenIQ (NIQ), developed in collaboration with Kearney, indicates that AI is altering competitive dynamics across global markets, with clear implications for the South African food and beverage B2B sector.

AI-driven innovation

AI technologies are enabling faster and more precise product development. Capabilities such as AI-powered concept testing, product formulation optimisation, and predictive analytics in food manufacturing are now accessible to a wider range of businesses. This is particularly significant for emerging food brands in South Africa, which can use these tools to accelerate innovation cycles without the capital requirements traditionally associated with R&D.

NielsenIQ highlights that AI is democratising access to advanced capabilities. Challenger brands are using AI to respond to consumer trends in health and wellness products, functional beverages, and pet nutrition, all of which are gaining traction in both global and local markets.

AI in consumer product discovery and purchasing

Consumer behaviour is shifting alongside these technological changes. The report notes that 74% of shoppers now use AI for product discovery, with more than half relying on AI for research and a growing segment completing purchases through AI-enabled platforms.

For South African food and beverage exporters and local FMCG brands, this signals the importance of AI-driven product discoverability. Visibility is no longer determined solely by shelf space or traditional retail distribution. Instead, AI systems embedded in search engines, e-commerce platforms, and retailer websites are influencing which products consumers see.

The importance of structured product data

In AI-mediated environments, product information must be optimised for machine interpretation. Structured attributes, clear product descriptions, verified reviews, and credible brand signals all contribute to visibility.

For food and beverage companies in South Africa, this means investing in digital product content optimisation, including accurate labelling, ingredient transparency, and consistent taxonomy across platforms. These elements improve ranking in AI-driven search and recommendation systems.

Rethinking growth strategies in FMCG

Traditional growth levers such as mergers and acquisitions are becoming less reliable as standalone strategies. The report indicates that CPG growth strategies in emerging markets must now prioritise relevance, speed, and adaptability.

Line extensions, for example, often redistribute existing demand rather than create new market opportunities. In contrast, AI enables companies to identify unmet consumer needs in the South African food market and test new concepts with greater precision.

Strategic implications for the South African market

For stakeholders across the food and beverage value chain, the convergence of AI-driven innovation and AI-mediated discovery requires a strategic response:

- Align product development with validated consumer demand
- Invest in AI tools for faster innovation and testing
- Optimise product data for AI-driven retail and e-commerce platforms
- Monitor early performance indicators and adjust quickly

As AI adoption accelerates, companies that integrate these capabilities into their operations will be better positioned to compete.

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What's happening?