

# food & beverage

REPORTER

September 2026

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## Managing change across the food and beverage value chain

Change in food and beverage manufacturing is rarely confined to one part of the operation. A decision about an ingredient can affect processing. A change in processing can influence product characteristics. Packaging choices can affect recycling, supply chains and market access. Skills, equipment and process control connect these decisions.

This issue of *Food & Beverage Reporter* examines these connections and the developments shaping production across the value chain.

Phoebe Davin, Senior R&D Technologist at **Synercore**, examines dietary fibre in bakery formulations. Fibre's ability to bind and retain water can influence yield, moisture retention, crumb structure and shelf life. For manufacturers developing higher-fibre breads, cakes, muffins, and other products, understanding these interactions is key to maintaining processing performance and product characteristics.

Processing itself can influence ingredients. **Green Cell Technologies®** (GCT®) has commissioned laboratory testing comparing conventionally manufactured retail beetroot powders with beetroot processed using its Dynamic Cellular Disruption® (DCD®) and Disruptor® technology. The findings indicate that processing methods can affect the nutritional profile of the finished ingredient, reinforcing the need to consider processing during product development.

In dairy production, filtration is another process requiring control. **Donaldson** examines filtration applications for water treatment, compressed air and steam purification, and highlights the relationship between equipment, handling, and maintenance.

Digital tools are also changing production practices. **GEA's** Changeover Assist application provides operators with step-by-step guidance for product and recipe changeovers on SmartControl-based machines. Standardised procedures can help reduce operator errors, product waste and unplanned downtime.

Technology requires people with the knowledge to use it. Wael Khoury, Managing Director of **Tetra Pak Southern Africa**, considers the skills requirements facing the next generation of food and beverage entrepreneurs. For small businesses, technical knowledge and access to training can influence their ability to establish and grow sustainable operations.

Packaging brings another set of considerations. The SAPRO Awards, held in Cape Town on 21 August 2026, highlighted applications for recycled plastic across packaging and commercial markets. For food and beverage manufacturers, this raises questions around recycle availability, specification and consistent supply.

**Mondi's** packaging development demonstrates how these considerations intersect, combining a corrugated outer box with recyclable, laser-marked flexible packaging for eCommerce and bag-in-box applications.

The common thread across these developments is that manufacturers cannot consider decisions in isolation. Ingredients, processing, equipment, people and packaging form an interconnected system.

For South African food and beverage manufacturers, understanding those connections will remain central to decisions about efficiency, product development, skills and supply chains. This issue examines where those decisions are being made and what they mean for the sector.

Simon

### Editor

Simon Foulds  
WhatsApp +447840535794  
editor@fbreporter.co.za

### Advertising

Wendy Breakey  
wendy@fbreporter.co.za  
083 653 8116

### Design & Layout

Jane Prinsloo

### Contributors

Phoebe Davin  
Wael Khoury  
Kris Kibble

### Published by

Food & Beverage Reporter  
47 Tugela Terrace  
Jacaranda Street  
Linden Ext  
2195

[www.fbreporter.co.za](http://www.fbreporter.co.za)



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## Grocery shopping steps up with new shoppable video feed

Pick n Pay is bringing social commerce into grocery shopping with the launch of Pick n Pay Inspire, a new shoppable video feed built into the Pick n Pay asap! app.

The new feature allows customers to discover recipes, products and other content and purchase featured items directly from the video, without leaving the app. Products appear as they are featured and can be added to a customer's basket with a tap, with groceries then delivered through Pick n Pay asap!'s existing fulfilment network.

The retailer describes Pick n Pay Inspire as a first for a South African grocery retailer and says the feature is designed to reduce the gap between product discovery and purchase.

"We've all done it – you spot a recipe on Instagram, screenshot it, open your grocery app and then try to remember what half the ingredients were. Two apps, one meal, various searches and inevitably something gets forgotten," says Enrico Ferigolli, Retail Executive: Omnichannel at Pick n Pay.

"With Pick n Pay Inspire, there are no screenshots, no searching and no trying to remember what you saw. It takes you from 'I want that' to 'it's in my basket' in just a tap."

The launch builds on Pick n Pay's existing experimentation with live shopping. Its Unreal Deals live shopping show has operated since 2024 across the retailer's website and social platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. The format combines product demonstrations and entertainment, allowing viewers to interact with hosts while shopping featured products.

The launch follows the introduction of another digital shopping feature from Pick n Pay asap! last month: Penny, a conversational AI-powered grocery shopping companion.

Penny allows customers to search for products and build a shop using conversational prompts, voice or images rather than relying solely on traditional search and filtering. Customers can use the tool for meal inspiration, product discovery and building and placing a grocery order.



## Top scores at 2026 IWSC South Africa spirits judging

KWV has taken the two highest scores at the 2026 International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC) South Africa spirits judging, including the competition's only Gold Outstanding medal.

The result comes as KWV marks 100 years since producing its first brandy in 1926. All nine KWV brandies entered into the competition received medals, comprising one Gold Outstanding, five Gold and three Silver medals.

Leading the results was the KWV XO Cellar Reserve Potstill 10 Year Old Brandy, which scored 98 points and received Gold Outstanding. The KWV XXO Potstill 20 Year Old Brandy followed with 97 points and a Gold medal.

Four further KWV expressions each scored 95 points and received Gold, while three additional brandies received Silver medals with scores of 93 points.

Only ten Gold medals and one Gold Outstanding were awarded in the spirits judging, meaning KWV secured half of the Gold medals awarded.

Pieter de Bot, KWV Master Blender, says the results recognise the breadth of the producer's brandy portfolio.

"We entered brandies with very different ages, styles and drinking occasions, so to see every one of them earn a medal is hugely rewarding," he says. The winning range spans brandies from three to 20 years old. KWV says the different expressions reflect the impact of wine selection, copper potstill



distillation, maturation and blending on the final spirit.

The 98-point XO Cellar Reserve was praised by judges for its profile of raisins, toffee apple, dried fruit, vanilla and sweet spice.

For the older expressions, the results reflect production decisions made years or even decades before the spirits reached the judging table.

The 2026 IWSC South Africa judging panel comprised Dr Winnie Bowman, Shane Mumba, Leah van Deventer and Rene Groenewald, alongside international judges Marcelo Scofano and Dr Muge Nebioğlu.

## Tiger Brands targets 3,000 entrepreneurial opportunities through Albany bread network

Tiger Brands is expanding its Albany Bread-On-The-Streets (BOTS) initiative, targeting 3,000 entrepreneurial opportunities while extending the bread brand's route-to-market across South Africa.

More than 800 BOTS stands are already operating, each run by an entrepreneur. Albany expects to grow the network to 3,000 stands over the next year.

The stands operate in high-footfall locations including taxi ranks, bus stations and busy roadsides close to Albany Bakeries. The programme currently operates in Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Free State, with plans to expand into additional provinces.

Bread is delivered directly to vendors through Albany's distribution network, providing a regular supply of fresh product while bringing the brand closer to consumers.

According to Tiger Brands, each BOTS entrepreneur sells an average of 20 to 30 loaves per day and makes approximately R2 profit per loaf. The company estimates that entrepreneurs operating their stands daily can generate around R1,300 per month.



The programme comes as South Africa continues to face significant youth unemployment. Tiger Brands cites Statistics South Africa's August 2026 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, which reported a youth unemployment rate of 47.4% among people aged 15 to 34.

Entrepreneurs are recruited through referrals from existing customers and community and trade networks, creating a route into the programme for people seeking income-generating opportunities.

The model provides Albany with an additional sales channel while allowing the retailer to establish a network of small-scale sellers in communities where bread is already a high-frequency purchase.

## Master butcher's son crowned 2026 Championship Boerewors winner

A 33-year-old investment actuary and portfolio manager from Bryanston, Gauteng, has been crowned South Africa's 2026 Championship Boerewors winner. Dean De Sousa took the title at the 34th annual Championship Boerewors finale on 15 August, impressing judges with a recipe designed to balance flavour and texture while retaining the characteristics of traditional boerewors.

The win has a strong family connection. De Sousa says his passion for making boerewors developed through childhood memories of attending Championship Boerewors events with his father, Tony de Sousa, who encouraged him to cook and experiment with flavours.

Tony de Sousa became one of South Africa's first Master Butchers in 2020 after gaining accreditation from Britain's Institute of Meat. He joined the Shoprite Group in 1998 and is now Spice and Meat Operations Manager at the retailer's Home Office in Brackenfell. "Winning the Championship Boerewors Competition is an incredible honour," says De Sousa. "My dad has been a huge inspiration throughout my journey and I'm happy to make him and the rest



of my family proud with this achievement."

As the 2026 winner, De Sousa's recipe will be produced as the new Championship Boerewors and sold in Shoprite and Checkers supermarkets nationwide from 4 September.

His prize package includes a Toyota Fortuner valued at more than R700,000 and R20,000 in cash. Second place went to Luhan Pretorius from Bloemfontein in the Free State, who received R50,000. Ashook Beharie from Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal, placed third and received R30,000.



## Tru-Cape welcomes landmark cherry market access to China

South African cherry producers have gained access to one of the world's largest cherry markets, opening a new opportunity for the industry to build exports and establish a presence among Chinese consumers. Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing welcomes the signing of a new protocol granting South African cherry producers access to the Chinese market for the first time.

The opening of the market is particularly significant given the scale of Chinese demand. China imported approximately 586,900 tonnes of cherries in 2025, valued at US\$3.3 billion, making it the world's largest cherry import market. The South African Department of Agriculture expects the new access to stimulate further investment in cherry production and create about 600 new jobs.

"We welcome this development wholeheartedly because it creates another market opportunity for South African cherries," says Roelf Pienaar, managing director of Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing.

"There is clearly strong demand for cherries in China, and the market presents an exciting opportunity for South African growers, particularly

because our season gives us the potential to supply fruit early, before Chilean volumes reach the market in significant quantities."

The biggest immediate challenge for exporters is likely to be fruit size. Chinese consumers have a strong preference for larger cherries, with fruit of 28mm and above commanding particular interest, says Johan Brink, sales director at Tru-Cape.

However, size will not be the only consideration for Tru-Cape.

South African cherries have an important advantage in eating quality, and the company believes this can help create a point of differentiation as it enters the Chinese market.

"While size is undoubtedly important in China, we believe South African eating quality can count strongly in our favour," says Lawrence Killian, Tru-Cape's marketing manager for the Far East. "South African fresh produce is already associated with quality among Chinese buyers. That gives us a platform from which to introduce our cherries to the market."

## A refresh for Vegan Trademark ahead of EU consumer rules

The Vegan Society has unveiled a new design for its Vegan Trademark, updating the certification mark ahead of changes to European Union rules governing environmental and sustainability claims.

The refreshed identity features a series of interconnected 'V' shapes that also resemble ticks, providing a visual representation of certification.

The Vegan Trademark was launched by The Vegan Society in 1990 and is now used across more than 73,000 certified products.

Phaedra Appleton, Head of Innovation and Development at The Vegan Society, says the redesign is intended to reinforce the assurance associated with independent certification.

"The new design reflects the assurance, credibility and confidence provided by the Vegan Trademark, from the beginning of the certification process through to the final product," she says.

The launch comes ahead of the implementation of the European Union's Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (EmpCo), which comes into effect on 27 September 2026.

The legislation introduces new requirements around consumer-facing environmental and sustainability claims, with greater emphasis on



accuracy, transparency and the use of substantiated claims.

The Vegan Society says the changes will increase the relevance of established third-party certification schemes for companies selling products into the EU.

"The refreshed Vegan Trademark will assure existing and new vegan consumers alike that products meet the rigorous certification requirements set by The Vegan Society," says Appleton.

The organisation says its certification scheme provides businesses with an independently assessed way of communicating vegan credentials to consumers.

The updated trademark also retains the Vegan Society name within the design, which the organisation says is intended to strengthen recognition and consumer trust.

The Vegan Society coined the term "vegan" in 1944 and launched the original Vegan Trademark in 1990. It describes itself as the world's oldest vegan charity.

The refreshed identity will now be rolled out as the organisation continues to certify products across food, beverage and other consumer categories.



# Eskort strikes double gold with 12 taste awards

South Africa's leading antibiotic-free pork produce has done something remarkable at two of the food industry's most respected taste competitions: entered six products and had every single one recognised at both events.

**T**he results; 12 awards across the 2026 Aurora International Taste Challenge and the South African Food and Beverage Awards; are testament to Eskort's approach to food innovation: bold flavours, exciting formats and great-tasting products designed around the way South Africans eat today.

Five products earned Double Gold at both competitions. The sixth earned Gold at both. Not one product came away empty-handed.

## The bold flavours behind the wins

The winning line-up tells its own story: Creamy Pepper Loin Chops, rich, tender steaks coated in a velvety pepper sauce earned Double Gold at both competitions, as did Jalapeño Twisters, Eskort's fiery twist on a classic: jalapeño poppers wrapped in the brand's famous streaky bacon.

The Pork Prego Steak, a punchy, flame-grilled favourite with deep Portuguese-inspired flavour, matched that achievement. So did Premium Sliced Gammon and Premium Sliced Pork Pastrami, both crafted to the exacting standards that define Eskort's premium deli range.

Completing the six, the Pepperoni Griller, perfectly spiced, satisfyingly smoky and made for the braai, earned Gold at both competitions.

## What the awards mean

Eskort CEO Arnold Prinsloo says these products show how Eskort is broadening the role of pork in South African kitchens: from quick weekday meals and lunchboxes to relaxed weekend braais and special-occasion entertaining.

"To have six products recognised twice by expert panels evaluating both local and international

excellence is a powerful endorsement of the standards our teams work to every day," says Prinsloo.

"These awards belong to everyone across our business who turns consumer insight into products that deliver on flavour, quality and convenience. Most importantly, they give shoppers even more reason to choose Eskort with confidence."

The consistency of the results is particularly significant. Matching recognition across all six entered products at two independent competitions speaks to the strength and discipline of Eskort's product development pipeline.

"A once-off accolade is worth celebrating, but matching results across all six products tell a bigger story about the rigour and creativity behind our innovation. This recognition shows exactly why Eskort is easy to love," says Prinsloo.

## A South African success story

These awards sit within a broader narrative of heritage, trust and continuous reinvention over the 109 years since Eskort was founded in the small town of Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal.

With farms that meet rigorous biosecurity standards and factories that combine deep expertise with modern food technology and world-class food safety, Eskort's range of more than 300 products includes fresh pork, braai cuts, a full convenience selection, staples (bacon, sausages, polonies, viennas) and Kiddos, South Africa's first pork products created specifically for children aged 3 to 13.

The Aurora International Taste Challenge, now in its eighth year, was established to recognise food and beverage excellence internationally and help consumers identify expertly rated products. The 2026 event brought food experts together in Stellenbosch. The South African Food and Beverage Awards, held in partnership with Aurora, recognise excellence within the local industry.

[www.eskort.com](http://www.eskort.com)

## New season, new coffee culture: Jacobs brings its heritage into the iced coffee era

Spring is here, the days are getting warmer and the coffee ritual is getting a little cooler. Jacobs is bringing its long-standing coffee heritage into a new generation of coffee occasions with the launch of Jacobs Ice Presso Latte and Jacobs Ice Presso Classic.

Ready to drink, chilled and made for life on the go, the new range gives coffee lovers another way to enjoy Jacobs – whether that means grabbing one on the way to campus, taking it along for the commute, meeting friends or simply switching up the usual coffee break.

"Coffee has a rich heritage, but the way we enjoy it doesn't have to stay the same," says Domaine Rautenbach, Senior Brand Manager at Jacobs. "Jacobs Ice Presso is about bringing that heritage into the here and now – giving consumers a chilled, convenient way to enjoy the coffee they know, but in a format that fits how they live today."

Available in two variants, Jacobs Ice Presso Latte and Jacobs Ice Presso Classic, the range brings a sweet, milky iced coffee experience into a ready-to-enjoy format.

For Jacobs, the move into ready-to-drink coffee is less about changing what coffee means and more about creating new ways to enjoy it.

"Our heritage gives us a strong foundation, but innovation is what keeps a brand relevant. We want



Jacobs to be part of the coffee moments that matter to consumers now, not only the ones we've always known," says Rautenbach.

With September marking Heritage Month in South Africa, the timing offers an opportunity to look at heritage in a different way, not simply as something to preserve, but as something that can evolve.

## Knorr launches Pasta Pots range in South Africa



Knorr has launched its Pasta Pots range in South Africa, targeting consumers looking for a warm snack that can be prepared in five minutes using hot water.

The range requires no stove and is designed to provide a more substantial alternative to conventional snacking occasions, according to Knorr.

The launch forms part of the brand's new #ForThatHunger campaign, which links physical hunger with the drive to pursue personal and professional ambitions.

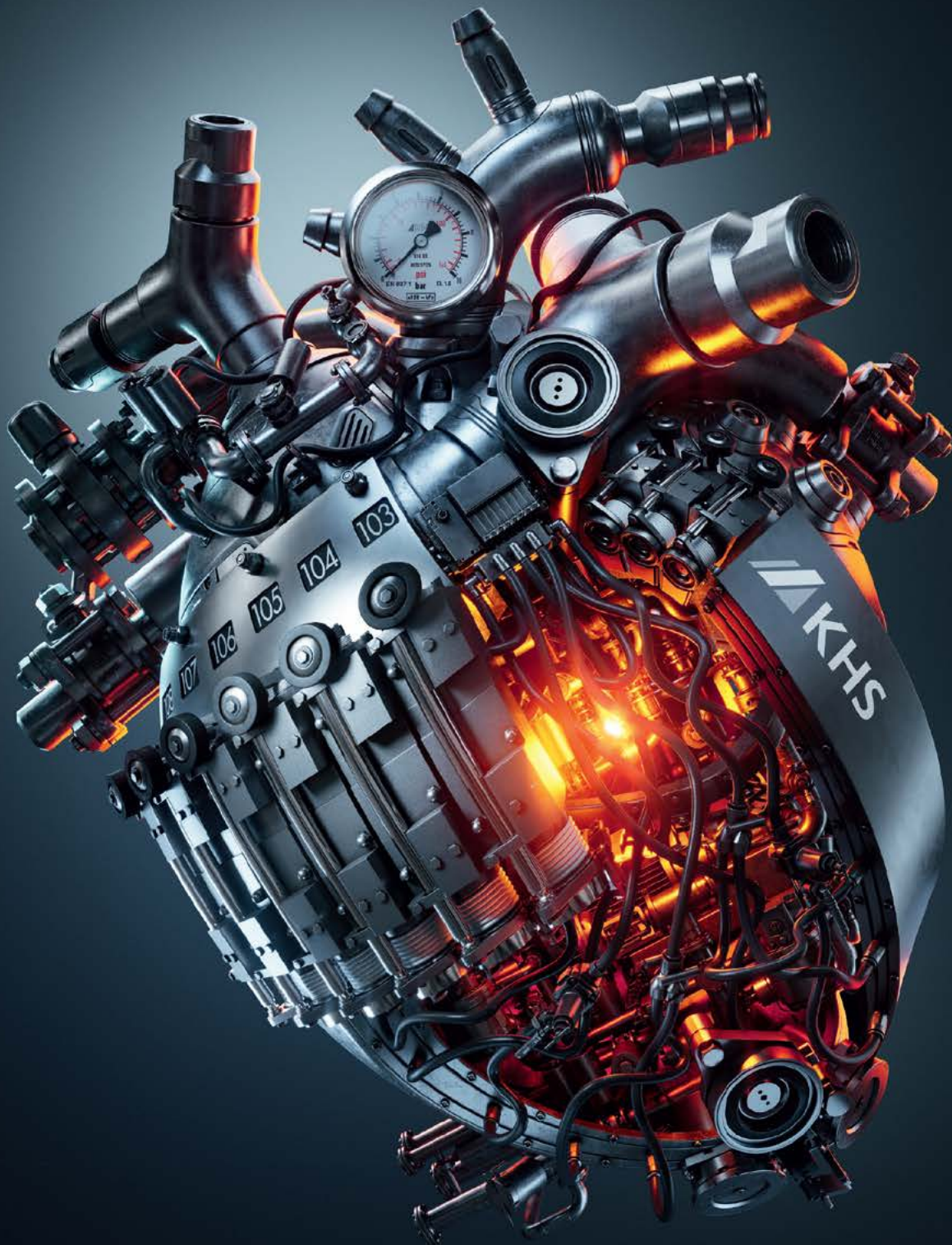
"We have imported the range to tap into the snacking occasion, which is often eaten alone, mostly during the weekday versus weekends," says Laureen Nonhlanhla Mxoli, Earned Media & Influencer Marketing Lead at Knorr.

"This is a warm snack alternative that can also be made more indulgent by adding fun ingredients to make it extra special."

Knorr says Pasta Pots are intended for consumers looking for a quick, warm option between meals, particularly during busy weekdays.



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# Seasoning technology takes centre stage for Heat and Control at Gulfood Manufacturing 2026

Heat and Control returns to Gulfood Manufacturing from 3 – 5 November 2026, showcasing new seasoning solutions alongside advanced processing technologies designed to help food manufacturers reduce costs, improve efficiency and enhance product quality.

Located in Hall 3, Stand D3-4, Heat and Control will provide live equipment demonstrations and showcase technologies spanning food processing, conveying, seasoning and complete integrated production lines.

“Gulfood Manufacturing is an important opportunity to connect with food manufacturers from across the MENA region and demonstrate how our latest technologies can support more efficient and sustainable production,” says Heat and Control General Manager South Africa – Jeff Rossouw.

“Our focus this year is on smart manufacturing solutions that help processors improve consistency, reduce resource use and maximise return on investment. Water management is particularly important in this region, and our advanced solutions can help you reduce water use, cut costs and improve overall line efficiency.”

## Proven technology and turnkey capability

Heat and Control supports food manufacturers worldwide through an extensive portfolio of trusted equipment brands, including FastBack®, Spray Dynamics®, Mastermatic®, Tek-Dry Systems Ltd, Hunt Heat Exchangers and Fabcon Food Systems.

Combining these technologies with engineering, applications expertise and project support, the company provides solutions ranging from individual machines to complete integrated production lines. This turnkey capability gives manufacturers a single point of contact across multiple processing stages and ensures equipment works together as one connected system.

## Experience smarter seasoning solutions

This year's display will include live daily demonstrations of the FastBack® Symphony On-Machine Seasoning System, designed for snack manufacturers. This breakthrough solution simplifies seasoning processes



and delivers smarter, cleaner results — with greater accuracy, efficiency, and sustainability.

Also on display will be a completely new solution for in-kitchen seasoning applications. The Spray Dynamics® Symphony In-Kitchen Seasoning System features patent-pending seasoning capture technology and is designed for exceptional performance. It also supports cleaner, safer working environments, reduces waste and makes everyday tasks easier for operators.

## Discover more sustainable drying

A high-performance Tek-Dry dryer will also feature on the stand. Requested by leading French fry processors around the world — Tek-Dry dryers can be built to use hot water heated with recovered energy from fryer exhaust as an alternative to steam, helping manufacturers reduce energy use and operating costs.

## The Heat and Control Food Souk returns

First introduced at last year's show, the Heat and Control Food Souk received a warm response from visitors and returns in 2026. Inspired by the regions traditional marketplaces, this interactive area invites visitors to explore Heat and Control's extensive equipment portfolio and helps them match their specific products with the right solutions and then speak one-on-one with industry experts.

**Find Heat and Control in Hall 3, Stand D3-4 at the Dubai World Trade Centre from 3 – 5 November 2026.**



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# Building the skills needed to grow Africa's next generation of food and beverage entrepreneurs

South Africa's food and beverage sector is dominated by small businesses. They account for 87,3% of businesses in the sector, yet the skills gap facing their owners is one of the least discussed barriers to growth.

For young entrepreneurs in particular, the challenge is acute. Youth unemployment sits at 60,9% for those aged 15 to 24 and 40,6% for those aged 25 to 34, according to Stats South Africa's Q1 2026 data. Too many young people see food entrepreneurship as the way in, and find that without the right technical knowledge, the door does not open.

Across South Africa, thousands of young food and beverage entrepreneurs are hitting the same invisible wall. Food and beverage entrepreneurship is one of the most accessible entry points into the economy, but only if the skills are there to sustain it.

The conversation about what holds back small food businesses tends to default to funding. Access to capital is a real barrier. But it is not the only one. Research into South Africa's food and beverages manufacturing sector shows that high training costs, an inflexible skills development system and lack of time are among the most critical challenges facing small businesses. The entrepreneurs who survive the funding challenge often run straight into the next one: they do not have the technical knowledge to scale.

Food safety compliance is a significant obstacle on its own. To supply products to major retailers, small businesses must meet stringent food safety audit requirements aligned to Global Food Safety Initiative standards. For a first-generation food entrepreneur without formal training, navigating that landscape is genuinely difficult. Add packaging, labelling and quality management requirements, and the gap between a good product and a market-ready one grows fast.

The skills infrastructure exists. The uptake does not. Only 9% of small businesses in the food and beverage sector applied for the discretionary grants available through FoodBev SETA to support skills development. Part of the problem is awareness. Part of it is time. A sole proprietor running a small food production operation cannot afford to take two days off for a compliance workshop.

Closing that gap means building skills on three fronts. The first is awareness entrepreneurs cannot apply for support they do not know exists, so industry



Wael Khoury

bodies, SETAs and technology partners need to take training to where small producers already are. The second is practical, modular training that respects the time constraints of a sole proprietor running production, sales and compliance alone. Lastly, technical mentorship that follows a business as it grows, not a one-off workshop.

This is where industry partners cannot afford to be passive. Technology providers, packaging companies and food processing specialists carry knowledge that entrepreneurs need to cross the gap between informal production and formal market access.

Working with food and beverage businesses across Africa, Tetra Pak has seen consistently that technical knowledge transferred early changes outcomes. A producer who understands how packaging technology affects shelf life, product safety and distribution reach makes fundamentally different decisions about how to build a business than one who discovers these factors only when a retailer's requirements land on their desk.

These are the practical foundations of a business that survives its third year, attracts a major buyer, and goes on to employ other people.

Africa's food and beverage sector has real growth potential: a growing middle class, rapid urbanisation and rising demand for processed products are creating genuine market opportunities. But opportunity without capability produces frustration, not growth. The entrepreneurs who will build the next generation of African food brands are already out there. What they need alongside funding is the technical knowledge to turn a good product into a scalable business.

[www.tetrapak.co.za](http://www.tetrapak.co.za)

## Author

Wael Khoury is Managing Director of Tetra Pak Southern Africa

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# Dietary fibre in bakery products: functional, nutritional & technological benefits



Dietary fibre has become one of the most important functional ingredients in modern bakery formulations. Although fibre was originally incorporated primarily to improve the nutritional profile of breads, cakes, muffins and other baked products, its technological benefits during processing and shelf-life are now equally significant. As consumer demand for healthier bakery products continues to grow, understanding the interactions between dietary fibres and the gluten-starch matrix, as well as their functional properties, is becoming increasingly important.

One of the most important functional properties of dietary fibre in baked goods is its exceptional water-holding capacity. Fibre polysaccharides contain numerous hydroxyl groups capable of binding substantial quantities of water through hydrogen bonding. Soluble fibres such as oat

$\beta$ -glucan, psyllium, pectin and inulin typically exhibit high water-binding capacities. On the other hand, insoluble fibres such as wheat bran and cellulose can physically trap water within their porous structures.

In bakery applications, increased water absorption offers several advantages. Doughs containing fibre generally require more water during mixing, while the additional bound water contributes to increased product yield. Water is the most economical ingredient in a bakery formulation. Increasing dough hydration can therefore increase the final batch weight and potentially improve the commercial profitability. When dough is correctly hydrated, glutenin and gliadin proteins form hydrogen bonds and hydrophilic interactions, allowing the gluten network to develop effectively during mixing without excessive mixing times that could damage the protein structure. This can improve dough handling properties, flexibility and elasticity, helping the dough to withstand high-speed industrial processing.

The addition of dietary fibres often leads to softer breads through several physical, chemical and structural mechanisms. Because many dietary fibres are highly hygroscopic, they attract and retain water rather than allowing it to be lost during baking and storage. Pentosans, which are non-starch polysaccharides naturally present in wheat bran, are particularly effective at retaining water, with some reported to hold several times their own weight in water. Inulin and psyllium husk can provide further



Beyond technological functions dietary fibre can provide nutritional benefits beyond improved texture and shelf-life

**“... successful fibre incorporation requires careful formulation optimisation. High levels of fibre can compete with gluten for water, interfere with gluten development and dilute the gluten network, resulting in reduced loaf volume and a denser, harder crumb”**

moisture-binding capacity. Together, these fibres help retain a greater proportion of the available moisture within the crumb after baking, helping to maintain crumb elasticity and prevent drying and crumbling during storage.

As baked bread cools and begins to age, the gelatinised starch molecules, particularly amylopectin, gradually realign and form more organised crystalline structures. This process, known as starch retrogradation, is one of the main causes of bread staling and crumb firming. Fibre can influence

this process by altering water availability and starch mobility. When water is strongly associated with fibre, less free water is available to participate in starch reassociation and recrystallisation, slowing retrogradation and helping bread remain softer for longer. Some fibres, such as psyllium and water-soluble pentosans, can also form a gel, which traps moisture further, delaying crumb firming.

Soluble fibres, such as inulin, dissolve in water and can form a three-dimensional, gel-like network as the polysaccharide chains interact with each other and the surrounding water. This network can provide some of the functional characteristics normally associated with fat, including lubrication, moisture retention, improved mouthfeel and enhanced softness. These properties are what makes soluble fibres a practical tool in fat-reduced bread formulations, where they can be used to keep the crumb soft and limit the drop in eating quality that is usually associated with fat reduction.

Soluble fibres can also interact with the gluten-starch structure and influence dough rheology, gas retention and loaf volume. Inulin, for example, alters dough rheology and allows the dough to expand more freely during fermentation, resulting in a higher loaf volume and a softer, more aerated crumb. Wheat bran and other fibre-rich ingredients can provide related benefits through different mechanisms. Rather than simply increasing dough extensibility, fibre particles can interact with and reinforce the gluten-starch matrix around the gas cells formed during proofing. This can improve gas-cell stability and reduce the tendency to merge into larger pockets as the dough expands. The results are a finer, more even crumb structure, with less of the toughness and chewiness associated with large, irregular cell walls.

The benefits of fibre are particularly relevant to gluten-free bakery products. Gluten-free formulations lack the gluten network that normally provides structural support, retains fermentation gases and supports gas-cell expansion. As a result, gluten-free formulations often have a lower volume, a denser crumb and exhibit a greater tendency to stale rapidly. Fibres such as psyllium and inulin can help overcome these challenges by providing structure and improving water retention.

Dietary fibres can also contribute positively to freeze-thaw stability in frozen dough systems. Fibre-associated water is less available for ice crystal formation during freezing, reducing structural damage during freezing and thawing. This property is particularly valuable in industrial frozen bakery applications where repeated or prolonged exposure to temperature fluctuations can otherwise compromise dough quality.

Beyond their technological functions, dietary fibre can provide nutritional benefits beyond improved texture and shelf-life. Fibre can support

digestive health, increase satiety, help regulate blood glucose responses and contribute to a healthier gut microbiome. Soluble and prebiotic fibres, such as inulin, psyllium and  $\beta$ -glucans, can increase the viscosity within the gastrointestinal tract, slowing digestion and carbohydrate absorption. Fermentation of certain fibres by gut microbiota also produces short-chain fatty acids that support the production of satiety hormones such as GLP-1.

**“...dietary fibre serves far more than a nutritional role in baked products. Its ability to bind and retain water, increase product yield, delay staling, improve moisture retention, enhance crumb softness and shelf-life extension makes it a valuable functional ingredient in bakery formulations”**

Despite the benefits, successful fibre incorporation requires careful formulation optimisation. High levels of fibre can compete with gluten for water, interfere with gluten development and dilute the gluten network, resulting in reduced loaf volume and a denser, harder crumb. Certain fibres can also affect

moisture distribution and accelerate staling if not properly managed. When fibres are used as a sugar or fat replacement, they can influence browning, sweetness, crispiness, mouthfeel and overall texture. Natural fibre sources can introduce bitterness, colour changes or bring about undesirable sensory characteristics. Highly fermentable fibres such as inulin may cause digestive discomfort when consumed in large amounts. Therefore, fibre type, particle size, water-binding capacity, hydration behaviour and inclusion level must be carefully considered to achieve the desired nutritional- and technological benefits without compromising product quality or consumer acceptance.

In conclusion, dietary fibre serves far more than a nutritional role in baked products. Its ability to bind and retain water, increase product yield, delay staling, improve moisture retention, enhance crumb softness and shelf-life extension makes it a valuable functional ingredient in bakery formulations. When carefully selected and properly hydrated, dietary fibres enable manufacturers to produce bakery products that satisfy both technological requirements and consumer demand for healthier foods.

[www.synercore.co.za](http://www.synercore.co.za)

**Author**

Phoebe Davin, Senior R&D Technologist, Synercore



Doughs containing fibre generally require more water during mixing, while the additional bound water contributes to increased product yield



# BUN AND ROLL RANGE

Premixes and improvers available in different dosage options to suit various bakery applications and production requirements.

## APPLICATIONS



Burger buns



Hot dog rolls



Dinner rolls



Sandwich rolls

GREAT BUNS  
START WITH GREAT  
DOUGH.

## PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Formulated to improve dough performance and produce consistently high-quality buns and rolls. Suitable for a wide variety of bakery applications, from artisanal production to industrial-scale lines.

## BENEFITS

- Improved dough strength, gas retention and processing tolerance for better volume, crumb structure and overall quality.
- Consistent baking performance that improves production efficiency and reduces waste.
- Helps maintain product softness and moistness over shelf-life.

## OUTCOMES

- **Soft and fluffy**  
Buns and rolls with excellent volume, texture and visual appeal.
- **Batch-to-batch consistency**  
Reliable results that help bakers meet consumer expectations every time.

# Protein is no longer the industry's biggest challenge – formulation is



For much of the last decade, conversations around protein focused on growth. New protein sources were identified, investment centred on developing alternative proteins, and manufacturers raced to satisfy growing consumer demand for products that supported health, wellness and more sustainable lifestyles.

**W**hether the discussion centred on plant-based foods, sports nutrition, functional beverages or healthy ageing, the underlying assumption was largely the same: consumers wanted more protein, and the industry's challenge was finding effective ways to deliver it.

Although the protein market has matured, headlines focus on slow growth in certain categories such as plant-based meat, which risks obscuring more significant shifts across the wider food and beverage industry: Consumers have not fallen out of love with protein. They have fallen out of love with protein products that do not taste good.

Consumers continue to prioritise protein in modern diets, but they are no longer willing to compromise on taste, texture or overall eating experience. As protein moves beyond specialist nutrition into mainstream food and beverage categories, the challenge is not to add protein but to formulate products that deliver meaningful nutrition while maintaining the sensory qualities consumers expect.

## Priority protein

The nutritional argument for protein is straightforward, and consumers understand its role in promoting satiety, muscle maintenance, active lifestyles and healthy ageing. The rapid growth of GLP-1 medications is increasing consumer interest in nutrient-dense foods. As people eat smaller portions, manufacturers face greater pressure to deliver meaningful levels of protein and nutrition in more compact formats.

This development has significant implications for product development. The industry is beginning to see growing demand for products capable of delivering higher levels of protein within smaller serving sizes and more convenient consumption formats.

Functional beverages, snack bars, bakery products, meal replacement solutions and on-the-go nutrition formats are all being asked to provide greater nutritional value within compact eating occasions. Yet while nutritional expectations are

increasing, consumer expectations around taste, texture and enjoyment remain unchanged. It is at this point that new product development becomes considerably more complex.

### Complex formulation challenges

For many years, products high in protein had a niche positioning, and consumers were often willing to compromise on taste or texture as long as the functional benefit was clear. But as high protein moves into everyday food and beverage categories, these compromises are no longer acceptable.

Today's consumers are not comparing protein-enriched products with the sports nutrition products of a decade ago, but with the best products available in each category. A protein cookie has to compete with premium bakery products, fortified beverages must hold their own next to café-quality drinks, while high-protein snacks must deliver on overall eating pleasure. Although nutritional benefits may encourage a consumer to try a product for the first time, repeat purchase behaviour is still driven overwhelmingly by sensory experience.

**“As protein moves beyond specialist nutrition into mainstream food and beverage categories, the challenge is not to add protein but to formulate products that deliver meaningful nutrition while maintaining the sensory qualities consumers expect”**

### No longer a differentiator

The consequence is that protein alone is no longer a differentiator. Great taste coupled with protein is. However, adding protein ingredients can introduce technical challenges that actively work against a great eating experience.

Protein is nutritionally valuable but also disruptive. In beverages, higher protein inclusion can create viscosity challenges, chalky mouthfeel, sedimentation issues and flavour imbalances. In baked goods, protein can influence structure development, moisture retention and dough softness throughout shelf life. In snacks and bars, protein interactions can affect texture stability, resulting in products that become progressively harder or less appealing over time. Plant proteins can also introduce grassy, bitter or beany flavour notes, while some dairy proteins contribute a dry mouthfeel - diminishing overall enjoyment.

These challenges become even more pronounced as manufacturers attempt to balance multiple consumer demands simultaneously. Today's consumers are looking for products that are high in protein, formulated with recognisable ingredients, commercially affordable, stable throughout shelf life and enjoyable

to eat. Each of these objectives influences formulation decisions as improvements in one area can create compromises elsewhere. Protein innovation is therefore less about higher protein content but more about solving the formulation challenges in a final product.

### Complete ingredient systems

As a result, the food and beverage industry is moving away from individual ingredients and towards complete ingredient systems and formulation expertise.

Success depends on understanding how proteins interact with fibres, starches, hydrocolloids, enzymes, flavour systems and processing conditions to achieve both nutritional and sensory objectives.

The aim is to integrate protein so effectively that consumers barely notice its presence. This requires technical expertise throughout the supply chain as manufacturers look to partners that can solve formulation challenges rather than simply supplying ingredients. Future innovation will rely on advanced solutions for texture optimisation, flavour modulation, moisture management, process efficiency and shelf-life performance.

Here, high-quality ingredient suppliers such as IFF and GoodMills Innovation play an important role, offering significant application expertise and ingredient technologies to overcome sensory and technical hurdles associated with protein fortification. Whether through texture systems, flavour solutions, functional cereal ingredients or application-specific formulation support, the objective is the same: higher nutritional performance without compromising consumer acceptance.

### Connecting manufacturing & formulation expertise

For ACI Group, this is changing how value is delivered to customers. Access to ingredients remains essential, but so is the ability to connect manufacturers with technical expertise, formulation support and application knowledge. To create a competitive advantage, manufacturers need partners to steer them through the growing complexity of higher nutritional ambitions.

Recent developments in the protein market appear less like signs of slowing demand and more like evidence of a category reaching maturity. The challenge is delivering protein in ways that feel effortless, enjoyable and seamlessly integrated into everyday eating occasions.

The brands that succeed will be those that deliver better nutrition while maintaining the taste and texture consumers already enjoy. Achieving that balance requires more than ingredients alone. It requires formulation expertise.

**Author**  
Gareth Clark, ACI Group

# Independent laboratory comparison suggests processing may be the missing link in beetroot nutrition



For years, beetroot has been promoted as one of nature's most effective ingredients for supporting exercise performance, cardiovascular health through metabolic use of nitric oxide. Yet according to Green Cell Technologies® (GCT®), the industry may have been overlooking the single biggest factor influencing its effectiveness - not the beetroot itself, but how it is processed.

**N**ew comparative laboratory testing commissioned by GCT and conducted by internationally accredited laboratories, compared a selection of conventionally manufactured retail beetroot powders with beetroot processed using GCT's patented Dynamic Cellular Disruption® (DCD®) and Disruptor® technology. The results suggest that processing methodology can have a profound effect on the nutritional profile of the finished ingredient.

Among the most notable findings were:

- 410.95% higher naturally occurring nitrate concentration
- 2570% more dietary fibre
- 226.5% more protein
- 7600% more naturally occurring iron
- Significant increases in calcium, potassium and magnesium
- A substantially lower effective serving size, reducing ingredient cost per functional dose by approximately 81%.

The Disrupted product also contained no e-numbers or excipients and through the process, there is no waste.

According to GCT CEO Roy Henderson, the findings reinforce a much broader issue confronting the global food ingredient industry.

**"If valuable compounds remain trapped inside intact cell structures or are discarded during conventional processing, manufacturers may unknowingly be formulating products with significantly less nutritional value than the original raw material offered"**

"The question should no longer be simply the type of crossed use, but also what has happened to that crop before it reaches the consumer." If valuable compounds remain trapped inside intact cell structures or are discarded during conventional processing, manufacturers may unknowingly be formulating products with significantly less nutritional value than the original raw material offered.

Unlike many conventional beetroot powders, which rely on peeled roots and can generate waste streams during processing, GCT's DCD® process uses the whole vegetable (no waste). The company says the non-thermal, non-chemical process opens more than 99% of plant cell structures, preserving naturally occurring



fibre while making nutrients more bioavailable without additives, carriers or excipients.

As consumer demand grows for cleaner labels, improved ingredient functionality and more sustainable manufacturing, processors are increasingly being challenged to extract more value from existing raw materials while reducing waste.

Henderson believes processing technology is becoming one of the next major competitive advantages in functional foods.

"Manufacturers have spent decades searching for the next superfood. Perhaps the next breakthrough is not another ingredient at all - but processing the ingredients we already have more intelligently."

The beetroot work forms part of GCT's wider research programme investigating how Dynamic Cellular Disruption® and Disruptor®-tech can improve ingredient functionality across fruits, vegetables, grains, botanicals and seaweed, while reducing waste and improving manufacturing economics.

Manufacturers, formulators and ingredient companies interested in evaluating DCD® Beetroot Powder can request technical data, comparative laboratory reports and product samples directly from Green Cell Technologies

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Manufacturers, formulators and ingredient companies interested in evaluating DCD® Beetroot Powder can request technical data, comparative laboratory reports and product samples directly from Green Cell Technologies.

[www.greencelltechnologies.com](http://www.greencelltechnologies.com)

## SAME BEETROOT. DIFFERENT PROCESSING.

What happens when processing changes?



Comparative laboratory analysis of DCD® processed beetroot powder and commercially purchased beetroot powder demonstrates how processing methodology can dramatically influence the value recovered from the same biological resource.

### What could be recovered from other raw material?

Conduct a trial with us. Put the technology to the test.

Green Cell Technologies® | The Science of Value Recovery

*Comparative results relate to the specific samples tested. Cost-per-dose calculation is based on GCT's stated wholesale price assumptions and measured nitrate concentration and should not be interpreted as universally representative of all commercial beetroot powders.*



## Partnership launched to strengthen South Africa's food system

Tiger Brands and Stellenbosch University's (SU) Faculty of AgriSciences entered a three-year, strategic partnership aimed at strengthening the resilience, sustainability and safety of South Africa's food and agricultural system.

Bringing together SU's research expertise and Tiger Brands' extensive experience across the food value chain, the partnership will support research, postgraduate development, knowledge exchange and practical innovation in three priority areas: agronomy, agricultural economics and food safety.

The collaboration aims to translate research into practical solutions that can improve on-farm productivity and profitability, strengthen local agricultural value chains, enhance food-safety capability and help build greater resilience to climate and economic pressures.

Sustainable local sourcing represents both a commercial and societal priority for Tiger Brands. The company derived more than 90% of its revenue in 2025 from food and beverage products with 70% of agricultural procurement spend during the same year directed at local agricultural producers. Many of these locally sourced commodities are farmed in regions facing acute water stress and growing climate vulnerability, increasing the need for the business to become more actively involved in the agricultural industry.

"Building a more resilient food system requires us to think beyond today's challenges and invest in the knowledge and partnerships that will secure future

supply. By combining SU's research excellence with our experience across the food value chain, we have an opportunity to turn research into practical impact that strengthens productivity, competitiveness, and access to quality, affordable food," says Tjaart Kruger, CEO Tiger Brands.

Cross-disciplinary research will focus on key commodities and regenerative agricultural systems across strategic staple, protein and processing crops, including wheat, oats, sorghum, tomatoes, groundnuts and beans.

The initiative will also strengthen collaboration between researchers, producers and industry and build the research, innovation and outreach capacity needed to support the future of South African agriculture.

The partnership builds on Tiger Brands' existing and longstanding collaboration with SU through the Centre for Food Safety. Importantly, the investment extends beyond individual research projects. It will contribute to postgraduate education and the development of emerging researchers, while creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and professional development through lectures, short courses, conferences, seminars and technical collaboration in areas including food science and

technology, microbiology, chemistry and good agricultural practices.

"This partnership demonstrates the kind of long-term investment that universities and industry can make together in service of society," says Prof Deresh Ramjugernath, SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor. "Tiger Brands' support will enable us not only to advance important research, but also to invest in our students and emerging researchers, strengthen capacity, share knowledge more widely and support education across the food and agricultural sector. It is through partnerships like this that we can encourage people, and build the capabilities needed to contribute meaningfully to sustainable agriculture, food safety and food security in South Africa."

"We are grateful to Tiger Brands for their continued support in shaping the future and sustainability of the South African food system," says Prof Gunnar Sigge, Chair of the Department of Food Science. "We believe the confidence that Tiger Brands has in the Department and the Faculty of AgriSciences stems from many years of delivering industry relevant research and solutions based on sound science. This partnership not only contributes to the food system in South Africa as a whole but enhances the development and skills of our graduates entering the workforce."

Prof Pieter Gouws, Director of the Centre for Food Safety in the Department of Food Science, says the

collaboration provides an important opportunity to connect scientific research more directly with real-world food-system challenges.

"The initiative will achieve greater social impact to address South African challenges such as agriculture, food safety, food security and sustainability. The initiative will also build capacity in research and postgraduate development ultimately leading to developing future scientific and agricultural leadership. It will shape a food system that is more resilient, sustainable and trusted for generations to come," adds Gouws.

Kruger says collaboration between universities, industry and the agricultural sector is increasingly important as South Africa responds to climate change, pressure on natural resources and the need to maintain affordable and secure food supplies.

"No organisation can solve the challenges of climate-change and supply chain competitiveness on its own. Partnerships bring together academic knowledge, commercial insight, agricultural expertise and practical experience. By working together, we can find practical solutions, rooted in scientific rigour, that strengthen South Africa's food system for a more affordable and food-secure future," says Kruger.

[www.tigerbrands.co.za](http://www.tigerbrands.co.za), [www.sun.ac.za](http://www.sun.ac.za)

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**food & beverage**  
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# Handling & maintenance in filtration: Turning daily practice into process protection

In dairy production, filtration works quietly in the background by treating water, refining compressed air, and purifying steam. Yet its role is anything but secondary. It directly supports product quality, food safety, and operational reliability. What ultimately determines its effectiveness, however, is not just the filtration technology itself, but how it is handled and maintained over time.

**A**cross the industry, leading dairy operations recognise that filtration performance is not only engineered—it is managed. This perspective is reflected in Donaldson's approach to filtration solutions for food and beverage applications, where system design and daily practice work hand in hand to help protect process integrity.

## Where filtration performance begins

Filtration performance starts well before installation. Filters are precision-engineered components, designed to deliver defined retention efficiencies, often at sterile levels. However, these capabilities can be compromised early through improper handling.

Exposure to dust, damaged packaging, or poor storage conditions can introduce contamination or reduce effectiveness. Even small oversights such as touching filter media during installation

with bare hands may impact performance from day one.

This is why leading dairy operations treat filter handling as part of their quality system. Filters are stored in clean, dry areas, packaging is checked before use, and installation is performed with care. These simple steps ensure filtration systems start their lifecycle in optimal condition.



### Maintenance as a control strategy

Once installed, filtration systems operate in dynamic environments. Particle loads vary, moisture levels change, and production demands shift. Without structured maintenance, these variations can gradually reduce performance.

The challenge is that problems rarely appear suddenly. Instead, they develop over time—rising differential pressure, changes in dew point, or reduced condensate removal efficiency. If left unaddressed, these small changes can evolve into contamination risks or operational disruptions. Routine monitoring provides the visibility needed to manage this.

### Recognising critical control points

Not all filtration applications carry the same level of risk. In dairy processing, certain stages represent critical control points (CCPs), where filtration directly affects product safety and compliance.

Steam used in pasteurisation, water used for cooling and cleaning, sterile air in fermentation, and compressed air in packaging all come into direct or indirect contact with the product. At these points, filtration is essential for contamination control.

Failures here can lead to reduced shelf life, product loss, or audit findings. For this reason,

filtration systems at CCPs require enhanced attention such as regular inspection, validation, and verification to ensure continuous performance.

### Building a structured maintenance routine

Consistency in filtration performance depends on a structured approach to maintenance. Best-practice dairy operations integrate filtration checks into daily workflows, creating a layered system of control.

Typical routines include:

- Daily checks: Monitoring differential pressure, draining condensate, and verifying utility conditions.
- Weekly inspections: Checking filter loading, detecting oil carryover, and assessing water and steam quality.
- Monthly reviews/ annual validation: Reviewing performance trends and evaluating filter performance over time.

This structured approach ensures early detection of deviations, allowing corrective action before product quality or operations are affected.

### The impact of small oversights

Filtration failures often result from small, cumulative issues rather than major breakdowns. A condensate



## STRONGER FILTRATION. SAFER DAIRY PROCESSING.

Water, steam, and compressed air can introduce contamination risks in dairy production if not properly managed.

Donaldson Filtration Solutions help reduce risk and protect product quality and brand trust.

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deshnee.ganesen@donaldson.com

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trap that is not drained can introduce moisture into compressed air systems. A dryer operating outside specification can increase humidity, promoting microbial growth. An overloaded prefilter can allow particles to pass downstream, reducing the effectiveness of final filtration stages.

As a result, this can lead to contamination, reduced shelf life, or production downtime.

A key challenge is that such problems may remain invisible until their effects appear in the final product. By that stage, corrective actions are more complex and costly. Consistent maintenance helps shift detection upstream—preventing issues before they escalate.

### Integrating filtration into operations

The most effective filtration strategies are embedded into the overall operational culture. This includes

**“Once installed, filtration systems operate in dynamic environments. Particle loads vary, moisture levels change, and production demands shift. Without structured maintenance, these variations can gradually reduce performance”**

training personnel on correct handling procedures, integrating filtration checks into standard operating routines, and using performance data to guide decisions.

When filtration is actively managed rather than passively maintained, its value increases significantly. It becomes a measurable contributor to process stability, product quality, and operational efficiency.

### From maintenance to confidence

In a sector where product quality and consumer trust are critical, structured handling and maintenance provide the assurance that filtration systems perform as intended day after day. They support compliance, reduce risk, and help prevent unexpected disruptions. Most importantly, they ensure that filtration consistently fulfills its role as a protective barrier within the process. And this role is defined by how systems are handled and maintained.

Put simply: the true performance of filtration lies not only in the technology, but in the care, it receives over time.

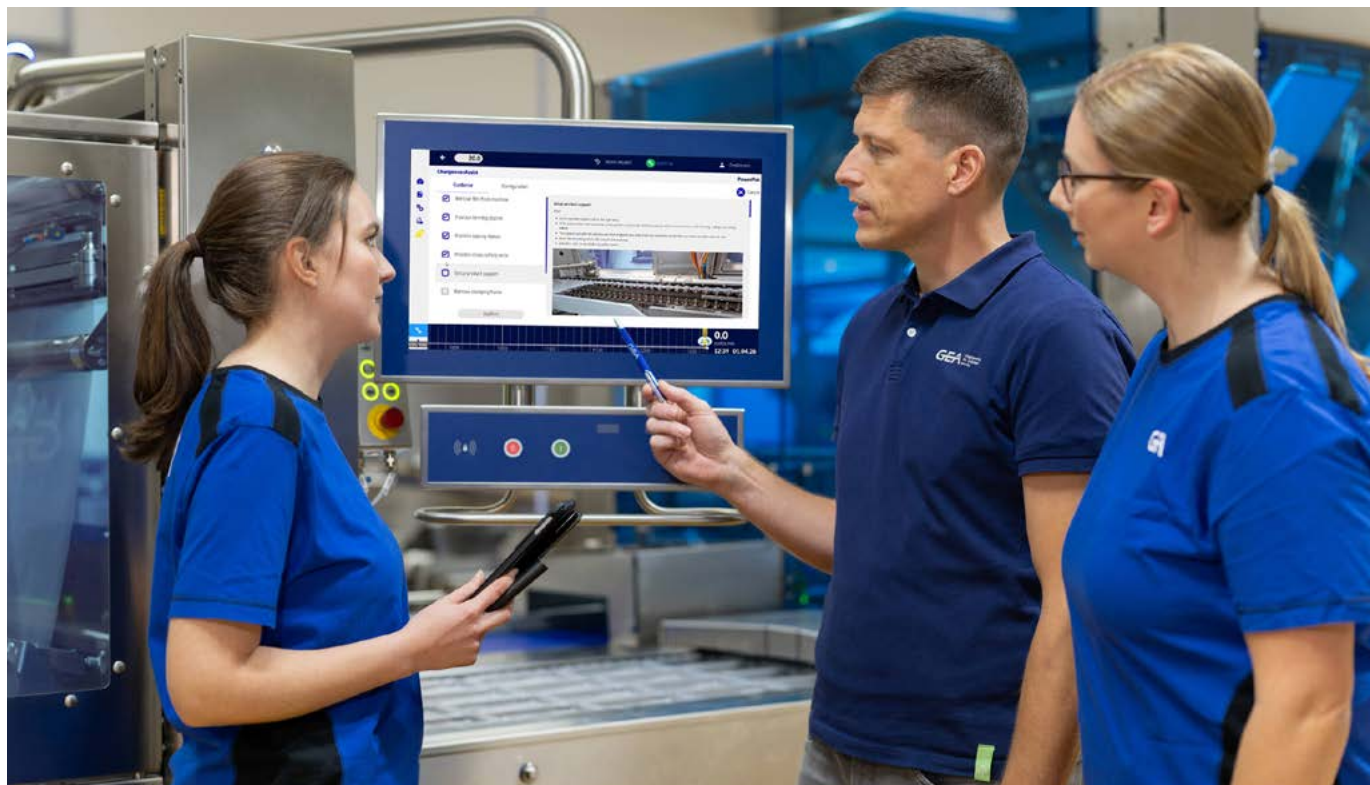
For more insights on optimising filtration performance in dairy applications, explore Donaldson's Dairy Best Practices Guide:



[www.donaldson.com](http://www.donaldson.com)



# Changeover Assist reduces errors, waste and downtime during product changeovers



GEA is introducing Changeover Assist, a new digital application that provides standardised support for product and recipe changeovers on SmartControl-based machines. The software guides operators step by step through the changeover process, helping reduce operator errors, product waste and unplanned downtime.

The digital assistant was developed primarily at GEA's production site in Biedenkopf-Wallau (Germany), the company's center of excellence for horizontal packaging machines. The software is initially available for GEA PowerPak thermoformers and the GEA MaxiFormer drum former, with a phased rollout to additional machines, including the GEA OptiSlicer, planned. Going forward, GEA also intends to consolidate the slicing and loading systems portfolio of its Food Solutions business unit

in Biedenkopf-Wallau. This will help reduce interfaces and better align future development work for individual machines as well as integrated line solutions.

## Product changeovers: a critical process step in food production

For many food manufacturers and packaging operations, product and format changeovers are among the most demanding steps in industrial production. High employee turnover, the use of seasonal labour and growing product variety add further complexity. Every deviation, such as using the wrong packaging materials or skipping individual changeover steps, can result in waste, rework, quality deviations or production interruptions.

## Recipe-based operator guidance directly at the machine

Changeover Assist addresses these challenges with digital, recipe-based operator guidance directly on the SmartControl HMI. The application displays only the steps relevant to the specific product changeover, supports multiple languages and can be enhanced with images, videos and additional work instructions.

Each completed step is confirmed and documented, increasing transparency, traceability and process reliability throughout the changeover. The machine can only restart once all required steps have been properly confirmed.

“With Changeover Assist, we make valuable machine and process knowledge available at all times, which helps our customers carry out changeovers safely and efficiently, regardless of individual experience levels,” says Michel Theiss, Product Manager Digital Solutions at GEA. “The result is fewer operator errors, less material and food waste, faster onboarding of new employees and greater overall production reliability.”

### Centralised management of changeover instructions via InsightPartner

A key component is the integration with the cloud-based InsightPartner solution. Customers can centrally manage and update their own changeover instructions there and enrich them with multimedia content. This creates a digital knowledge base that can be used across sites and continuously developed over time. In addition, the new InsightPartner Notification Service, together

with the corresponding Mobile App, provides an integrated solution for sending real-time machine notifications directly to responsible personnel.

**“The application displays only the steps relevant to the specific product changeover, supports multiple languages and can be enhanced with images, videos and additional work instructions”**

### Digital process reliability and consolidated line expertise

Changeover Assist is another key element of GEA's digitalisation strategy. The application supports the company's goal of developing connected, user-friendly and process-reliable solutions for food processing and packaging, helping strengthen customers' industrial value creation over the long term. Changeover Assist is being continuously developed further at the Biedenkopf-Wallau site. This development work is increasingly benefiting from the planned centralisation of customer-facing functions at the site, creating greater proximity to end customers and better conditions for integrated working.



## Did you know?

### Digital process reliability and consolidated line expertise

GEA is investing in the expansion of its Process Test Centre (PTC) at its headquarters for mechanical separation technology in Oelde, Germany. As part of the expansion, a third test room will be added, creating additional capacity for customer pilot tests, internal development projects and testing with larger machines and advanced skid solutions. Once completed, the PTC will cover a total area of 3,500m<sup>2</sup> and support pilot tests with raw material or media input of up to 5,000 litres per hour. The construction project is part of a broader plan to modernize and further develop the PTC, with completion scheduled by the end of 2026.

[www.gea.com](http://www.gea.com)

# Should we be planting for today's market, or tomorrow's realities?

Every vineyard is a long-term investment in an uncertain future. As climate conditions shift, markets evolve and new technologies emerge, producers are being challenged to make decisions today that will shape South African wine for generations to come.

**W**ine has always been an industry built on patience, where great vineyards are measured in generations, not seasons. But as environmental and commercial pressures change, tradition alone is no longer enough to guarantee resilience. Innovation is no longer optional; it's a matter of 'when', not 'if'. But that's a difficult truth in an industry where a single wrong decision doesn't just cost a season; it can cost a generation.

Nowhere is the shift from tradition to necessity clearer than beneath the ground. Rootstocks were once viewed as a practical necessity, protecting vines against pests like phylloxera and helping them adapt to soil conditions. Today, their role has expanded into something more strategic: influencing vine vigour, drought tolerance, nutrient uptake and overall performance. When combined with careful cultivar selection, they also help producers build vineyards suited to conditions decades in the future.

## From rootstocks to gene editing: the next frontier

If rootstocks represent viticulture's first great act of future-proofing, the industry may now be entering its next one.

Wian Mouton, Head of Cultivar Management at Bosman Adama, describes the trajectory of the past few decades of viticulture in distinct phases. 'We have moved from a foundation of survival to one of precision,' he explains. 'Viticulture began by simply managing what nature provided; grafting allowed us to overcome soil-borne threats (phylloxera), and clonal selection enabled consistency. Today, we are entering the era of resilience by design where gene editing and new varieties allow us to anticipate environmental pressures before they manifest in the vineyard.'

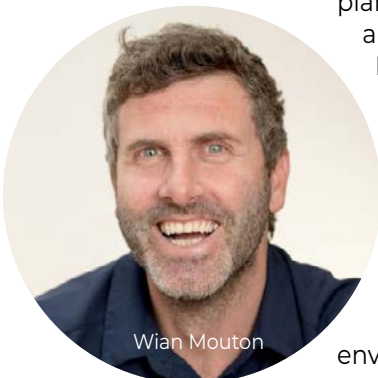
Earlier this year, Italy became the first country in Europe to begin open-field trials of gene-edited grapevines, spearheaded by Professor Mario Pezzotti, a plant genetics expert at the University of Verona and founder of the biotech spin-off called EdiVite.

His research aims to make viticulture more sustainable by protecting established grape varieties from disease pressure without relying on heavy fungicide use.

For Pezzotti, the significance of the Italian trials extends well beyond science. 'It shows that genome editing in viticulture is no longer only a laboratory promise, but a technology that can be tested under real agronomic, environmental and regulatory conditions,' he says.



Petri de Beer



Wian Mouton

He is careful to draw a distinction between this and older, more contentious biotechnologies. 'In the case of DNA-free genome editing, such as the approach we use in grapevine, the final plant does not contain foreign DNA. The objective is not to create an artificial organism, but to reproduce precise genetic changes that could also occur naturally or through conventional breeding, while doing so in a faster and more targeted way.'

Crucially, Pezzotti argues the goal isn't to replace the varieties consumers already know and love, but to protect them. 'If a cultivar such as Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Glera, Sangiovese, Chenin Blanc or Pinotage faces increasing disease pressure or climate stress, genome editing may offer a way to preserve that cultivar for future generations rather than replace it with something entirely different.'

The environmental case is equally pressing. Mouton points out that reducing chemical dependency in the vineyard has moved from a nice-to-have to a licence to farm. 'Sustainability is no longer a marketing term; it is a licence to operate,' he says. 'We must emphasise the human health impact alongside environmental health, as it is not just our soils and ecosystems being impacted by synthetic inputs.'

Regulation, Mouton adds, will determine how quickly any of this reaches South African vineyards, with Europe's New Genomic Techniques frameworks already shifting. 'When climate change and disease pressure threaten regional production, regulations must evolve to allow growers to remain productive and sustainable,' he says. 'Regulatory clarity acts as the "green light" for innovation, allowing research to translate into commercial, field-ready solutions.'

So, if advancements in science and technology are providing more tools than ever before, why aren't they

being adopted faster? The answer may have less to do with vineyards than with markets.

### **The real challenge may not be scientific**

Wine industry expert, agricultural economist and winemaker Petri de Beer, observes that consumers remain remarkably conservative in the wines they choose. Globally recognised varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz continue to dominate purchasing decisions, making it difficult for lesser-known cultivars to gain widespread acceptance, even when they may be better suited to local growing conditions.

Mouton frames the same tension slightly differently, describing it as an industry-wide efficiency paradox. 'We have a vast library of genetic potential, but commercial success demands high-volume reliability,' he says. 'Could it be that our current decision-making is optimised for risk mitigation rather than genetic exploration?'

**“Reliable level control reduces overfills, prevents downtime, protects silo integrity, and ensures better use of storage capacity. In a high-dust barley silo, the right radar and point-level instruments keep production stable and predictable”**

### **When the vineyard succeeds, but the market doesn't**

The tension between adaptation and acceptance becomes glaringly clear when discussing alternative grape varieties. Throughout Europe and other wine-producing regions, Mediterranean cultivars have attracted growing interest because of their natural tolerance to heat and drought. While South Africa has begun exploring similar opportunities, growing an excellent grape is only part of the equation.

De Beer recalls working with varieties that proved exceptionally well suited to local conditions, requiring minimal intervention in both the vineyard and the cellar, only to discover that consumers simply didn't recognise their names. The wines performed well in competitions and impressed winemakers, but commercial success remained elusive. In many cases, unfamiliar varieties ultimately found their way into blends rather than being bottled under their own names.

Mouton has seen the same pattern play out closer to home. Varieties like Nouvelle and Chenel, he notes, have struggled for a specific reason: not the vine, but the story around it. 'The obstacle isn't just growing the vine; it's the "brand identity" of the grape,' he says. He



The green vine nursery fields Lelienfontein Vine Nursery in Wellington

sees newer entrants like Sauvignon Gris and Muscaris, now being planted in areas like Wellington, facing the same test. 'We must prove their quality in the cellar while simultaneously creating a new narrative that consumers find exciting. If the wine is excellent, the name will eventually carry its own weight.'

There's also a bureaucratic hurdle that seldom makes it into the conversation. Several of these newer varieties still need formal recognition before they can be marketed on their own terms. 'From an administrative point of view, the mentioned varieties have yet to be accepted into the Wine of Origin Scheme, a process which is ongoing and hope to be finalised by the end of 2026,' Mouton says.

Mouton is careful to note that unfamiliar doesn't have to mean unapproachable. 'We shouldn't compare an unfamiliar variety to a known staple, we should champion its unique character,' he says. 'The story of disease-resistant varieties and the tangible benefits of producing them must be leveraged to assist in managing consumer expectations and building deeper appreciation for these wines.'

### Innovation in service of tradition

'The economic cost of tradition deserves more open conversation,' Mouton says. 'Maintaining a status quo



The grafting of vine are all done by hand



A grafted vine showing the scion on the top right grafted onto the rootstock on the bottom left

that requires high chemical inputs and significant water usage is becoming more expensive and riskier every year for growers. From where we sit, changing your vines shouldn't be seen as a risk; it's a strategic necessity worth exploring together.'

Pezzotti frames the same idea from the research side: 'Wine countries should not ask whether they must choose between tradition and innovation,' he says. 'The real question is how innovation can help tradition survive in a rapidly changing world.'

## Discovery Zone 2027 wine applications open

ProWein 2027 introduces the Discovery Zone, an exhibition format that gives wine producers exhibiting at the trade fair for the first time the opportunity to present new products, production approaches, and wine concepts to the international wine trade.

Applications are now open to vineyards and wine producers that have not previously exhibited at ProWein. The format is intended to connect producers with international buyers, sommeliers, specialist retailers, importers and media representatives seeking new producers, wine styles and developments.

The Discovery Zone will focus on subjects influencing wine production and consumption, including Orange Wine, regenerative viticulture, PiWi grape varieties and winemakers entering the sector from other industries. The format will provide participants with an opportunity to explain their production methods and products directly to the trade.

Instead of conventional exhibition stands, the Discovery Zone will operate as an open-plan tasting and networking area. Producers will present a curated selection of up to four wines while engaging directly with visitors.

### Selection criteria for Discovery Zone participants

Participation will be limited. Following the application period, ProWein will work with industry partners and experts to select participating producers according to defined criteria.

The selection process will not be based on a wine estate's size or recognition. Instead, consideration will focus on whether applicants fit the Discovery Zone concept and can contribute perspectives relevant to the development of the international wine sector.

For South African wine producers considering international market development, the Discovery Zone provides a route to participate in ProWein while focusing on direct engagement with international wine buyers and trade representatives.

Applications and participation requirements are available on the website.

[www.prowein.com/discover\\_en](http://www.prowein.com/discover_en)



# Why SA loses its women-owned businesses after the start-up stage



South African women are starting businesses at close to the same rate as men, but far fewer of them are still trading three and a half years later. The country has almost twice as many men as women running established businesses, at 7.9% of men aged 18 to 64 against 4.1% of women. The drop-off has become the defining problem in women's entrepreneurship, and it points to the conditions women build in rather than to any shortage of ambition or capability.

**T**he cost of that attrition is measurable. Citi's research on women entrepreneurs estimates that closing the gender gap in business growth would add between \$1.6 trillion and \$2.3 trillion to global GDP and create up to 433 million jobs.

The reasons women and men give for closing a business diverge sharply. Exit data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor South Africa shows personal and family matters accounting for 21.5% of women's exits against 12.1% of men's, and difficulty obtaining finance for 21.5% of women against 17.8% of men.

Gugu Mjadu, Executive General Manager: Marketing and Impact Investing at Business Partners Limited, convenors of the Entrepreneur of the Year® awards, points to conditions that have little to do with how good a business is. "Investor and procurement decisions still run on assumptions about who looks like a safe bet."

Two decades of trading have not settled the question of who owns Bashumi Instruments & Control Services. Lomo Senoamadi founded the laboratory instrumentation firm in 2003 and was shortlisted in

last year's awards. "It is not once, in one meeting. It happens repeatedly, over years, in different forms. More often it arrives as a question about who handles the technical side, as though the woman named on the B-BBEE certificate and the person running the business cannot be the same person. It puts you on the defensive in a meeting where you should be discussing the client's problem."

The same question follows women onto the factory floor. "I've had to deal with people assuming I'm the secretary, not the founder," says Trudy Maleka, founder of Ambesha Africa, who took the Emerging Business title in 2024. "As a woman, I've also had to think about things like travelling alone to deliver to sites, or going to workshops late at night."

Where it does real damage is at the point of applying for finance. "Applying for financing early in my journey required me to over-prepare just to be considered," recalls Wendy Dlomo, founder of hospitality and property business The Living Collective and another 2025 finalist. "My male counterparts would walk in with half the documentation and twice

the confidence, and somehow that confidence was often interpreted as credibility."

In construction, the terms of that finance bite hardest. "When you're young, and you get an opportunity or a project, nobody is willing to lend you money. Some government institutions have long turnaround times, and your client doesn't have that time to wait for you," explains Feziwe Mpaku, founder of Independent Girls Business Enterprise and shortlisted in 2024. "We don't come from families where you can just borrow money, so you end up going to places where the interest is higher, and that eats into your profits."

**"The cost of that attrition is measurable. Citi's research on women entrepreneurs estimates that closing the gender gap in business growth would add between \$1.6 trillion and \$2.3 trillion to global GDP and create up to 433 million jobs"**

Regulation adds to the load. "Compliance costs land hardest on the smallest businesses, because a five-person firm carries much the same administrative load as a large one without the staff to absorb it," Mjadu observes. In Mpaku's experience it decides which work is available at all. "You have this huge amount of money that you need to pay towards compliance, and if you're not compliant you can't do a lot of jobs. It has become a gatekeeper in terms of opportunities."

Mjadu adds a third barrier, one that decides who hears about an opportunity in the first place. "The networks that move a business from small to medium remain largely male, so women work without the introductions their competitors get as a matter of course."

Samantha Skyring, founding CEO of Oryx Desert Salt and 2024's Small Business Entrepreneur of the Year®, can point to an instance. "I suspect finding investors would have been easier, or at least getting myself introduced and connected to potential investors would have been easier. There was one particular crowd of investors a colleague of mine knew about, but never mentioned to me. Would they have done an introduction if I were a man?"

The last of Mjadu's conditions is the one that follows a founder home. Childcare, in her account, is still handled as a welfare question in South Africa when it is economic infrastructure, and that alone changes what a founder can take on.

Dlomo describes what it costs day to day. "There is a constant negotiation between ambition and everything else life expects of you. I've taken calls at 10 p.m. about property issues and felt guilty for being unavailable, while simultaneously feeling guilty for

being on the phone. Men are rarely made to feel that their ambition comes at the expense of their identity."

Where the founders converge is on what changes once a business is past its first few years. Ambesha Africa turns ten in September. "Year one was about survival. Getting any client. Making rent. Now it's cash flow, big contracts, managing 20 people and exporting across borders," Maleka observes. "The challenges got bigger, but so did I."

The wider argument for keeping these businesses going is the substance of this year's Women's Month theme, "Building Resilient Economies for All". "Building a resilient economy means investing in building the skills here rather than importing them," argues Senoamadi.

"It means the economy must work for the person on the ground, not just in boardrooms," adds Maleka. "When you invest in women, you invest in jobs, communities and the future of our economy."

Part of the responsibility, Skyring suggests, sits with women themselves. "Let's first learn to value ourselves. When we lift each other up instead of competing with each other, we all become stronger, and so do the businesses, communities, and economies we're building together."



# From Baobab to Rooibos: African products are in demand



**The Good Life Show  
Johannesburg  
takes place from  
18–20 September 2026  
at the Sandton  
Convention  
Centre.**

The Good Life Show's Hosted Buyer Programme brings qualified buyers from India, Pakistan, the UAE, Greece, Ghana, China and Botswana, representing retail, distribution, manufacturing and import businesses, connecting international sourcing demand directly with African producers and brands.

**A**t the heart of the programme is a targeted matchmaking process. Buyers' sourcing requirements are assessed in advance and matched with exhibitors whose products and capabilities align with their needs, creating focused opportunities for conversations around product specifications, volumes, distribution opportunities and potential new markets.

For exhibitors, the value of the Hosted Buyer Programme goes beyond simply meeting an international buyer. It provides an opportunity to understand what buyers are looking for, present products directly against those requirements and see whether there is a commercial fit. For buyers, the initiative offers an efficient way to discover relevant African products and suppliers across multiple categories in one location.

Opportunities for African producers exist around distinctive indigenous ingredients, specialty beverages, natural beauty ingredients and value-added agricultural products that offer points of differentiation in international markets. These products are increasingly relevant to international markets as demand grows for natural and clean-label ingredients, functional beverages, plant-based and gluten-free foods, and premium skincare. This is a snapshot of what the Netherlands research organization CBI (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries) has identified in recent years with four distinct African products having international appeal:

**Baobab - Africa:** A distinctive African functional ingredient with applications across food, beverages and wellness products, with growing opportunities in international markets.

**Fonio - West Africa:** A traditional West African grain gaining international attention as a nutritious, gluten-free specialty grain, with CBI research highlighting opportunities to develop European market demand and increase access for African exporters.

**Nilotica shea butter - East Africa:** Nilotica offers an emerging ingredient opportunity for premium natural skincare and personal care, particularly where buyers are seeking traceable and naturally derived ingredients. Produced primarily in Uganda, with smaller amounts produced in South Sudan and Kenya, Nilotica offers an alternative to conventional West African shea.

**Hibiscus, rooibos and honeybush — African botanical beverages:** Hibiscus offers versatility across beverages, food and natural colourants, while South African rooibos and honeybush bring distinctive African provenance to premium tea and botanical

**“Opportunities for African producers exist around distinctive indigenous ingredients, specialty beverages, natural beauty ingredients and value-added agricultural products that offer points of differentiation in international markets”**

beverage markets. Rooibos is naturally caffeine-free, adding to its appeal as an alternative to traditional tea.

These examples give a hint to the type of products and emerging trends that the Hosted Buyer Programme is designed to unlock, by connecting African products with identified international

demand and helping businesses move from product discovery to meaningful commercial conversations.

There are also opportunities in more established African export categories. Recent European market research identifies processed fruit, vegetables and edible nuts as categories offering opportunities for developing-country suppliers.

Heidi Warricker from Live Events says: “There is no shortage of exciting products being developed across Africa, but having a great product is only part of the journey. You need access to the right markets and the right people to turn that product into a commercial opportunity. The Hosted Buyer Programme is about creating those connections and putting African businesses in front of buyers who have a genuine interest in what they are producing and giving both sides the opportunity to explore relationships that could open new markets.”

**“By connecting qualified international buyers with African producers, the Hosted Buyer Programme aims to accelerate export opportunities, strengthen market access and support the growth of African brands in global markets”**

Importantly, international buyers are looking for more than a compelling product story. Consistent quality, reliable supply, traceability, food safety, appropriate certification, sufficient shelf life, export-ready packaging and the ability to meet volume requirements are all important considerations when developing new supplier relationships.

The Hosted Buyer initiative forms part of The Good Life Show's expanded B2B trade focus, delivered in partnership with Ndarama Works, the show's official B2B Global Trade Engine responsible for facilitating international buyer engagement, business matchmaking and trade opportunities between exhibitors and global markets. Precious Mahove, COO of Ndarama Works, says: “We are seeing increasing interest in African-origin products that combine sustainability, authenticity and strong supply potential.”

By connecting qualified international buyers with African producers, the Hosted Buyer Programme aims to accelerate export opportunities, strengthen market access and support the growth of African brands in global markets.

[www.thegoodliveshow.com](http://www.thegoodliveshow.com)

# Gulfood Manufacturing 2026 puts food security and manufacturing innovation at the centre of region's growth agenda

The UAE's food and beverage sector is entering a new phase of industrial growth, with the country targeting an increase in the sector's contribution to GDP from AED 30 billion to AED 40 billion by 2028, alongside plans to grow food trade from AED 25 billion to AED 40 billion, and create around 20,000 new jobs.

The country is also targeting AED 2 billion in annual food import substitution through local production, supporting up to 200 food factories and increasing local production capacity by 15–30%. Together, these ambitions signal the scale of the shift underway as the UAE and wider GCC region accelerate efforts to strengthen food security and expand the role of local production within the economy. Building the industrial capacity to manufacture, process and distribute food at scale will be critical to converting these ambitions into sustained economic growth.

Supporting this momentum, Gulfood Manufacturing returns to Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from November 3–5, 2026, under the theme 'Powering Food Security Through Manufacturing Innovation', bringing together leading food manufacturers, suppliers, investors, technology providers and policymakers. Aligned with the UAE's National Food Security Strategy 2051, the exhibition spans the full F&B production value chain - from ingredients, processing and packaging to supply chain solutions, control and automation - connecting the technologies, expertise and partnerships needed to build more efficient and future-ready food systems.

## The destination for industry-defining manufacturing innovation

Global processing and packaging leaders, including GEA, Heat & Control, Husky, Ishida, KHS, Krones, Middleby, Multivac, SIG Combibloc, Sidel, Tetra Pak and TNA, alongside ingredients powerhouses ADM International, BUNGE, Cargill, Chocolake, Döhler, DSM, Givaudan, IFF, IFFCO, MANE and Symrise, and supply



chain specialists, including ACME, Addverb, Delta Systems and Kanoo Machinery, will converge in Dubai to showcase the technologies and expertise driving more secure, efficient and scalable food production and distribution. Across advanced processing and packaging, next-generation ingredients, robotics and automation, AI and digital manufacturing, traceability, cold chain and predictive planning, the exhibition will showcase the technologies helping manufacturers improve efficiency, increase output, reduce waste and produce closer to market.

Mark Napier, Vice President, Gulfood Manufacturing, inD stated: "Strengthening food manufacturing capacity is fundamental to advancing the UAE's food security and economic ambitions. A more capable and agile manufacturing base can support greater local production, attract investment, accelerate technology



adoption and strengthen the supply chains underpinning the food economy. As a global trade and manufacturing hub, Dubai is uniquely positioned to connect regional manufacturers with international investors, technology providers and supply chain partners. Gulfood Manufacturing and its co-located platforms bring this wider ecosystem together, creating opportunities to forge partnerships, access new technologies and build the capabilities needed for the next phase of regional growth."

Vijay Injeti, Head of Sales and Business Development, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Intralox, said: "As production volumes rise across the Middle East and Africa, manufacturers are looking for ways to increase throughput without compromising safety or consistency. At Gulfood Manufacturing, we are looking forward to hearing directly from processors about the challenges on their production floors and exploring how automation, hygienic design and predictive maintenance can help them operate more reliably and efficiently."

Yannick Lefevre, Sales Manager, MEA and LATAM, FAM STUMABO, said: "Across the Gulf and neighbouring India, food production and value addition are growing rapidly, creating a clear need

for smarter, more precise processing. At Gulfood Manufacturing, we look forward to meeting companies who are focused on improving yield, reducing waste and increasing capacity, and showing how the right cutting technology can translate those priorities into measurable gains on the production floor."

Khaled Abo El-Nasr, General Manager of Döhler MENA, said: "Food security starts with supply reliability. At Döhler, we are strengthening our global network and supply chain to help customers navigate disruption and secure the ingredients they need to innovate and grow. Gulfood Manufacturing gives us the opportunity to engage directly with manufacturers, technology providers and industry leaders, exchange ideas and turn emerging opportunities into practical solutions for our customers."

#### Four exhibitions. One connected food value chain

Complementing Gulfood Manufacturing's focus on production and industrial capability, ISM Middle East, Private Label Middle East and GulfHost extend the proposition across the wider food and hospitality value chain, from product innovation and sourcing to retail, private label and foodservice operations.

ISM Middle East will spotlight the latest confectionery and snack innovations, connecting buyers with the products, brands and suppliers shaping the category. Private Label Middle East will connect retailers, brands and contract manufacturers with fully customisable private label solutions spanning food, non-food and branding services. GulfHost will showcase the latest equipment, technologies and solutions driving greater efficiency across commercial kitchens and foodservice operations.

Together, the four exhibitions present an end-to-end commercial ecosystem spanning the food value chain, giving buyers and industry leaders access to the technologies, products, suppliers and partnerships driving growth across the sector.

[www.gulfoodmanufacturing.com](http://www.gulfoodmanufacturing.com)



# R400 short, every month: the hidden cost of feeding SA's children falls hardest on women

The gap between what South African women have to spend and what it costs to feed their families has become impossible to ignore. Feeding one child a basic nutritious diet cost R980.66 in July. The Child Support Grant, the safety net relied on by millions of South African mothers, pays out R580. The shortfall, which amounts to R400.66 every month, for every child, lands almost entirely on women, who head 42.6% of South African households and who research shows are the first to go without so their children can eat.

**L**ocal surplus-food marketplace Refreshi is using Women's Month to put a spotlight on that gap, and to offer women-led households a practical way to close it: we have heaps of quality food, which is already being discounted because it needs to be sold in time, but is too often discarded before it reaches a female-led household that needs it.

## A gap that inflation figures don't capture

"South Africa's food inflation has been easing and is down to 1.6% in June from 2.9% in April, but slower price growth has done little to help households already priced out. According to the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity Group (PMBEJD), the average household food basket cost R5,530.52 in July, up R87.81 year-on-year. A woman working full-time on the national minimum wage takes home just R4,836.80 a month, meaning food alone now costs R693.72 more than her entire wage, before rent, electricity, transport or school fees are even considered," comments Jakob Holbak, Founder and CEO at Refreshi.

PMBEJD's Household Affordability Index, drawn from the lived experience of women shoppers across the country, adds a further layer: "women are smart and savvy shoppers, and shop around for bargains." But when the money runs out, bargain-hunting stops working: food simply comes out the trolley.

## The food is already there

Refreshi argues that a meaningful part of this gap is



already sitting on South African shelves. FoodForward SA Managing Director Andy Du Plessis estimates the country wastes around 10 million tonnes of food a year. At the launch of the Food Insecurity Report, Wits Business School's Ravi Pillay described the contradiction bluntly: "We have this perverse situation in South Africa where we have food, but it cannot go to those who need it."

The food offered through the platform is not damaged or expired. It is surplus stock that participating businesses need to sell within their appropriate consumption period.

## How it works

Shoppers reserve discounted "Surprise Bags" through the Refreshi app and collect them directly from participating stores, including Spar, OK Mini Marks, King Pie, Vovo Telo, Bootlegger, Vida e Caffè and Ou Meul, among others. The app is available on iOS and Android for all South African women to use.

[www.refreshi.co.za](http://www.refreshi.co.za)

# Packaging

REPORTER



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What's happening?

## Highlighting sustainability benefits of plastic packaging at Propack Cape

South Africa's plastics recycling industry is strengthening its contribution to the circular economy, with implications for food and beverage packaging manufacturers. According to Plastics SA, plastics recycling increased by 3% in 2025 to 485,000 tonnes, while domestic virgin polymer consumption declined by 2.8%.

More than 30% of recycled plastics is used in packaging, supporting continued demand for recycled polypropylene (PP), PET and HDPE in the South African food and beverage packaging sector. The growth of recycled material also demonstrates the role of plastic packaging in resource efficiency, waste reduction and circular manufacturing.

Plastic packaging can support sustainability across the product lifecycle. Its low weight can reduce transport requirements, while its barrier and protective properties help prevent contamination, damage and food waste. Where collection and recycling systems are effective, used plastic packaging can become feedstock for new products rather than being treated

solely as waste. These issues will be explored at Propack Cape 2026, taking place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 27–29 October. The exhibition will showcase packaging, plastics, processing, printing and labelling technologies, with recycling and sustainable packaging among the areas of focus.

The programme also includes free industry seminars addressing sustainability, automation and new technology. Pro-Plas Expo will provide additional focus on plastics recycling technology and polymer developments.

For South African food and beverage manufacturers, Propack Cape offers an opportunity to assess sustainable plastic packaging solutions, recycling technologies, and production systems that support greater use of recycled materials.



## Turning plastic waste into value



Plastic waste is increasingly being viewed as a resource rather than an end-of-life material, creating opportunities for the South African food and beverage industry to strengthen packaging recycling and circular economy systems.

As World Cleanup Day 2026 brings together more than 20 million people across more than 190 countries, the focus extends beyond collecting waste. The challenge is to keep plastic within the circular economy by creating economic value for recovered materials.

The Plastic is Fantastic Association (PiFA) is promoting a fact-based approach to plastics and recycling. Dominic Fiel, Executive Director, argues

that better material management, recycling and responsible use are central to addressing plastic waste.

Technology is also supporting the transition. Austrian recycling technology company Next Generation Recyclingmaschinen (NGR) develops systems for post-consumer and post-industrial plastic recycling, converting recovered materials into secondary raw materials. Its technologies include solutions for PET, PE and PP recycling, which are relevant to food and beverage packaging supply chains.

For South African packaging manufacturers, recyclers and brand owners, traceability and data will become increasingly important. Reliable information about recycled content, collection and processing can help integrate recycled plastics into international supply chains.

Grassroots initiatives also demonstrate the economic potential of plastic waste. Buy Food with Plastic uses collected plastic to generate income while addressing food insecurity.

For South Africa, the message is relevant: improving plastic recycling requires collaboration between packaging producers, recyclers, technology suppliers, policymakers and consumers. Treating plastic packaging waste as a valuable secondary raw material can support resource efficiency, recycling investment and a more effective circular economy.

## Microplastic pollution raises health concerns



Growing scientific evidence on the potential health effects of microplastics is increasing pressure on governments, health authorities and the food and beverage industry to reduce unnecessary exposure.

Research from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, published in *npj Cardiovascular Health*, analysed 709 coastal US census tracts and found that areas with higher environmental microplastic concentrations had higher prevalence rates of stroke, diabetes and hypertension. The researchers identified associations rather than proving that microplastics cause these conditions.

The findings add to research investigating microplastics in drinking water, food packaging and human tissue. A 2025 study published in *Nature Medicine* detected micro- and nanoplastics in human brain, liver and kidney tissue. Research published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* also reported micro- and nanoplastics in carotid artery plaque and an association with subsequent cardiovascular events.

Swedish water purification company Bluewater is calling for greater research and practical measures to reduce exposure. Chief Scientist Dr Ahmed Fawzy says increasing environmental concentrations and evidence of particles in human tissues warrant further investigation.

For South Africa's food and beverage sector, the issue has implications for drinking water quality, plastic packaging, food safety and microplastic contamination. Bluewater says independent Eurofins-verified testing found its water purification technology removed up to 99.99% of tested microplastic particles from contaminated drinking water, including polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene and PVC.

As research develops, manufacturers, bottlers and hospitality businesses will need to consider how microplastic pollution in food and beverage supply chains can be monitored and reduced.

## Amcor showcase's at Empack Stockholm

Amcor will showcase its food and beverage packaging solutions at Empack Stockholm, taking place from 30 September to 1 October at Kistamässan. The company's Nordic sales team will be available on stand C12 to discuss packaging formats for food and beverage manufacturers.

A key focus will be UniPak Luma, Amcor's lightweight packaging platform for cold- and ambient-filled dairy, chilled food and dry food applications. The round container is manufactured entirely from polypropylene and is designed to be recycle-ready where suitable recycling infrastructure is available.

UniPak Luma follows the launch of Amcor's UniPak 1 kg pot earlier this year, extending the company's portfolio for dairy packaging. According to Amcor, the UniPak range is suited to the dairy sector, including larger yoghurt formats.

Amcor's broader food and beverage packaging portfolio includes plastic bottles, jars, tubs and containers designed to support product freshness and shelf life. Lightweight PET bottles and jars are available for applications including juice, dairy, water, carbonated drinks and sauces. Thermoformed trays and cups target yoghurt, snacks and ready meals,



while tubs, pots and canisters serve dairy, spreads and confectionery applications.

For South African food and beverage manufacturers, developments in lightweight packaging, recyclable polypropylene containers and PET packaging formats highlight the continued focus on packaging efficiency, recyclability and shelf-life performance.

Amcor's participation at Empack Stockholm provides an opportunity to assess packaging solutions alongside developments in food packaging sustainability, lightweight packaging and recyclable food containers.

# Pyrotec marks 60 years in South Africa



From self-adhesive labelling to integrated coding, smart factory software and engineered production lines, Pyrotec's 60-year history reflects the changing requirements of South African packaging and manufacturing operations.

**W**hen packaging carries more information, more variants and more compliance requirements, reliability becomes a production issue rather than simply a packaging consideration. An unreadable batch code, inconsistent label application, a failed inspection or a packaging-line change can affect throughput, traceability, regulatory compliance, waste, product quality and operating costs.

As Pyrotec marks 60 years in 2026, the South African company's development provides an example of how packaging technology suppliers are expanding their role within food and beverage manufacturing. From its origins in self-adhesive labelling, Pyrotec now operates across label printing, coding and labelling equipment, packaging print, smart factory software, engineering, line integration and equipment finance.

## Building South Africa's self-adhesive labelling market

Pyrotec's history dates to 1966, following Joseph Beattie's acquisition of Label Processes in 1964. The business supplied self-adhesive roll-label material,

hot-stamping foil and label printing machinery at a time when these technologies had limited local market penetration.

Rowan Beattie joined Label Processes in 1967, gaining experience across the company's production processes. Today, as managing director, he continues to emphasise customer relationships, service reliability and investment aligned with manufacturing requirements.

"There was limited demand for roll materials or the equipment used to print and die-cut labels in those days," Rowan Beattie recalls. "Our growth required innovation and a willingness to build the market, not just serve it."

A significant development came in 1980 when Pyrotec became the sole licensee producing Fix-a-Form booklet labels in sub-Saharan Africa. The format gave manufacturers a way to accommodate additional product information, multiple languages, instructions, and regulatory content without requiring a larger primary pack.

For food and beverage manufacturers, this principle remains relevant as packaging must accommodate nutritional information, ingredient declarations,

traceability information, promotional content and multiple SKU requirements.

### Capital investment aligned with manufacturing requirements

Pyrotec's technology investment has included several significant developments over the past decade.

In 2018, the company introduced the Durst Tau 330 RSC digital roll-label press and ABC Digicon Series 3 finishing equipment, supporting faster turnaround and multi-variant label production.

In 2020, PackLink strengthened its software capabilities, integrating hardware and production data to improve line efficiency and identify defects and process issues.

PackPrint's lithographic capability was further developed in 2023 with a Heidelberg CX-102 four-colour press featuring inline coating and aqueous varnishing, supported by in-house plate imaging and finishing facilities.

In 2024, a second ABC F-510 inspection machine was installed to provide high-resolution camera inspection of pharmaceutical label rolls. In 2025, the label factory added 773 solar panels and three 100kW inverters as part of its energy-resilience and quality strategy.

Further capital investment includes carton converting and a carton folder-gluer, while additional label press investment remains under evaluation.

"We invest where it makes the biggest difference on the factory floor: speed, repeatability, and

confidence that every item leaving the line is correct," Timothy Beattie says.

### Supporting South African manufacturers nationally

Pyrotec remains privately owned and South African, with its headquarters in Capricorn Park, Cape Town. Its national footprint extends into Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, with distributors and representation across several African markets, including Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Angola, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda and Kenya.

For food and beverage manufacturers, local technical support can be an important consideration when production equipment fails or requires maintenance.

"Support and response times. Packaging, printing, and coding failures don't wait for convenient schedules," Rowan Beattie explains. "A national service capability and regional supply reach can be the difference between a minor incident and a costly disruption."

### Reliability as a production strategy

Equipment availability is only one component of manufacturing reliability. Pyrotec combines its technology offering with quality systems, technical training and continuous-improvement practices.

The company operates under ISO 9001:2015 and provides GMP and internal ISO auditor training.



Pyrotec's management team: Jacques Loubser – PackMedia National Sales Manager, Nasreen Van Staden – PA to Managing Director, Brandon Pearce – PackMark General Manager, Flip Van Schalkwyk – Financial Manager, Timothy Beattie – Director & PackMedia General Manager, Ruth Diedericks – SHEQ Manager, Shaun Pillay – General Manager PackLink Projects/Export Sales Africa, Megan Thompson – HR Manager (seated), Rowan Beattie – Managing Director (seated), Lazelle Coetzee – Marketing Manager (seated), Reggie Pfeiffer – Production Manager (seated), and Cheryl Petersen – Production Planning & Dispatch Manager (seated).

Its operational practices include daily uptime and downtime measurement and 5S implementation. Pyrotec also cites SMETA and SEDEX compliance, EPR compliance through Fibre Circle, FSC-ready systems where required and Level 3 B-BBEE status.

Financing is another component of its production support model. Pyrotec Finance enables customers to acquire equipment while spreading payments over time.

"We ensure that customers can acquire essential equipment and pay over time, protecting cash flow while keeping production lines moving," says financial manager Flip van Schalkwyk.

### 60 years of packaging technology and production support

Six decades after its origins in self-adhesive labelling, Pyrotec now brings together PackMedia, PackMark, PackLink, PackWorx, PackPrint and Pyrotec Finance.

For the South African food and beverage sector, this represents a shift from supplying individual packaging components or machines towards supporting the complete production environment. Label printing, coding and labelling, inspection, traceability, automation, engineering, software integration and financing can all contribute to packaging-line performance.

As manufacturers face increasing SKU complexity, traceability requirements, production targets and pressure to control waste and operating costs, the ability to integrate these functions becomes increasingly relevant.

"At Pyrotec, reliability is built as deliberately as any piece of equipment," Rowan Beattie says.



After 60 years, that approach remains central to the company's positioning: helping South African manufacturers improve production reliability, reduce waste and downtime, and maintain consistent packaging performance from the production line to the finished product.

[www.pyrotec.co.za](http://www.pyrotec.co.za)

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# Tackling SA's youth unemployment crisis

South Africa's worsening youth unemployment rate is pressuring businesses to look beyond procurement costs and consider how local manufacturing can support jobs, skills development, and supply-chain resilience.

South Africa's youth unemployment crisis is becoming increasingly difficult for businesses to ignore. Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the second quarter of 2026 puts the official unemployment rate at 33,6%, up from 32,7% in Q1. The number of unemployed people increased by 345 000 to 8,5 million, while employment fell by 16 000 to 16,7 million.

For younger South Africans, the situation is more difficult. Unemployment among people aged 15 to 34 increased by 1,5 percentage points to 47,4%, with 5 million young people unemployed. Among 15- to 24-year-olds, 36,4% were not in employment, education or training (NEET), according to the Q2 2026 labour-force data.

For manufacturing businesses supplying South Africa's food, beverage and packaging industries, the figures raise a practical question: can procurement decisions help create and retain local industrial employment?

Kris Kibble, Managing Director of IRP Engineering Plastics Powered by SystemFlex, believes they can: "Every time a South African business sends an order offshore for items that could be manufactured, machined or engineered here, it is choosing not to create the very jobs and apprenticeships this country desperately needs."



## Local manufacturing and the food and beverage supply chain

The food and beverage industry depends on reliable production lines. Conveyor components, wear strips, sprockets, modular belts and other engineering plastic components may be relatively small parts of a processing or packaging line, but their failure can interrupt production.

IRP Engineering Plastics Powered by SystemFlex manufactures conveyor components and engineering plastic solutions locally for industries including food, beverage and packaging. The company says local stock, engineering support and reverse-engineering capability can reduce the lead time associated with sourcing components internationally.

## IRP Engineering Plastics Powered by SystemFlex

"Our customers don't come to us just because we're South African," says Kibble. "They come to us because we solve their downtime problem faster than an overseas supplier can. But every one of those orders also keeps a machinist, an artisan or an apprentice employed here instead of in another country."

IRP has operated in South Africa since 1987 and identifies local manufacturing, readily available stock and fast delivery as part of its proposition. Its product portfolio includes conveyor chains, modular belts, sprockets, side-guide systems and wear-strip solutions.

For food and beverage manufacturers, this creates a direct connection between local procurement and operational performance. A locally manufactured replacement component can potentially reduce waiting time for imported parts while retaining expenditure within the domestic manufacturing ecosystem.

### **Procurement as an economic decision**

The argument for local sourcing is not simply about supporting South African companies. It is also about assessing the full cost of procurement.

An imported engineering component may appear cheaper when evaluated against the supplier's quoted unit price. However, the calculation can change when you include freight, customs duties, currency fluctuations, minimum order quantities, inventory requirements, technical support, and extended lead times.

South Africa's trade-policy environment is also changing. In May 2026, the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC) recommended increasing customs duties on certain polymer-based pipes and hoses from 15% to 20% after an investigation found that imported products were undercutting the local producer. ITAC said the measure was intended to support domestic production and local value addition.

Although the measure does not directly cover every engineering plastic component used by food and beverage manufacturers, it illustrates the wider pressure facing South African industrial producers competing against imported products.

For procurement managers, the implication is that the lowest initial purchase price should not necessarily be the only measure of value.

### **Skills development must accompany manufacturing investment**

Local manufacturing also creates an opportunity to address the skills shortage alongside unemployment.

IRP employs more than 60 people at its Lanseria facility, with 22 employees under the age of 35, according to the company. Its manufacturing capability includes CNC machining, injection moulding and assembly, while continued investment in machinery is being accompanied by employee training.

Kibble argues that investment in technology only delivers its full value when businesses invest in people.

"A CNC machine is only as good as the person who understands it, maintains it and knows how to solve the problem in front of them."

The company's experience includes employees progressing through different roles and developing technical expertise. Tshedza (Patrick) Mutavhatsindi,

for example, joined IRP as a floor painter and progressed into CNC machine operation and programming.

That pathway illustrates the potential role of South African manufacturers in developing artisans and engineering skills through workplace experience, rather than treating skills development as separate from production.

### **Building a stronger South African manufacturing base**

Stats SA's Q2 2026 figures show that manufacturing employment declined by 15 000 during the quarter, while employment increased in trade, construction and finance.

Against this backdrop, strengthening domestic manufacturing capacity matters not only for employment policy but also for supply-chain resilience.

For food and beverage processors, packaging manufacturers and production-line operators, sourcing locally where suitable products and capabilities exist can support several objectives simultaneously: shorter supply chains, reduced exposure to international logistics disruption, faster technical support and the retention of industrial skills within South Africa.

"Policy takes years to change an economy. A purchase order changes it this quarter," says Kibble.

The point is particularly relevant to businesses purchasing engineering components, packaging machinery parts and other industrial inputs. Procurement decisions are made continuously, creating an opportunity for companies to assess whether a component can be sourced from a capable South African manufacturer before automatically turning to an overseas supplier.

### **Why buying local matters to South African food and beverage businesses**

South Africa's unemployment challenge cannot be solved through local procurement alone. However, local manufacturing provides a mechanism through which commercial activity can support employment, skills development and industrial capacity.

For the food and beverage sector, the decision is also operational. Where a South African supplier can meet the required specification, quality, availability and lead time, local sourcing can become part of a broader strategy for improving supply-chain resilience.

"Buying local isn't charity," Kibble says. "It's about deciding, with every order, whether South Africa still has the capability, the skills and the jobs it needs in ten years' time."

With youth unemployment at 47,4% among 15- to 34-year-olds, the question facing South African businesses is therefore not simply where a component can be purchased most cheaply. It is whether procurement can simultaneously support competitive production, local engineering capability and the next generation of industrial skills.

# Recycled plastic moves further into South Africa's commercial product market

The 12th annual SAPRO Awards for the Best Recycled Plastic Products, held in Cape Town on 21 August 2026, highlighted a significant development for South Africa's plastics recycling industry: the increasing ability to convert post-consumer recycled plastic into commercially viable products for packaging, household, construction, leisure and other applications.

**H**osted by the South African Plastics Recycling Organisation (SAPRO) at SPYCED Restaurant at the V&A Waterfront, the awards brought recyclers, manufacturers, brand owners and other participants across the plastics value chain together around a central issue for the circular economy — creating sustained demand for recycled plastic.

For the South African food and beverage sector, that demand is particularly relevant. Recycled plastic has to move beyond collection and processing and into applications where manufacturers and brand owners can specify recycle as a functional raw material.

## Creating markets for recycled plastic in South Africa

Oliver Bonstein, General Manager at SAPRO, said the awards demonstrate the development of recycled plastic applications while highlighting their role in increasing recycling rates.

"This event celebrates the growth and development in using recycled plastic in the production of new products. The significance of this work is that it creates end-markets for recycled plastics, leading to higher recycling rates and less waste going to landfill."

The principle is central to South Africa's circular economy. Collection alone does not create a functioning recycling system. Recyclers require viable outlets for processed material, while manufacturers need consistent recycle that meets the technical requirements of their products.

This is increasingly relevant to food and beverage packaging companies examining recycled content, packaging design and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations.



## Polyco links EPR with recycled-content demand

Polyco PRO NPC returned as headline sponsor of the 2026 SAPRO Awards. The organisation operates an EPR scheme covering plastic packaging and supports collection, recycling infrastructure, waste-reclaimer integration, enterprise development and market development.

Patricia Pillay, CEO of Polyco PRO NPC, said the next stage of South Africa's recycling development depends on establishing markets for recovered material.

"South Africa has made significant progress in increasing the collection and recycling of plastic, but the next part of the challenge is ensuring there is a strong and sustainable market for the recycled material we produce."

Pillay added that the award-winning products demonstrate the potential created when manufacturers, brand owners and recyclers collaborate.

"Creating that demand is essential if we want to keep more plastic in circulation."

Polyco's EPR work also specifically identifies the development of secondary markets and end-use demand for recycle as an area for investment and collaboration.

For food and beverage manufacturers, this creates a direct connection between packaging design, recycled content, EPR and the economics of recycling.

## Recycled plastic applications

The 2026 winners demonstrated the breadth of applications now being developed from recycled plastic.

The Creative Category Gold award went to the Strata Nova Light, produced by Plastic Pioneers for brand owner Melt Studios using recyclate from Ocean Plastic Technologies.

In the Innovation Category, the Eco-Flat Wine Bottle won Gold. Stellenbosch Vineyards brought the product to market, with Polyoak Packaging as producer and Safripol supplying the recycled material. The entry demonstrates how recycled plastic and alternative packaging formats are being incorporated into the wine sector.

The Packaging Category Gold award went to the Organics and TRESemmé bottles, bringing recycled content into high-volume personal care packaging. Unilever SA was the brand owner, Astrapak the producer, and Myplas and Kubili supplied the recyclate.

For the food and beverage packaging industry, the example is significant because it demonstrates the potential for recycled content to enter high-volume consumer products rather than remaining confined to niche applications.

### PCR demand is critical to recycling growth

The PCR Demand Champions category was won by Tuffy Refuse Bags. Tuffy Promotions was both producer and brand owner, with Myplas supplying the recycled material.

Post-consumer recycled (PCR) material requires market demand to maintain its value within the recycling chain. Products such as refuse bags can therefore provide an established outlet for recycled polymers while demonstrating how recycled content can be incorporated into everyday products.

Polyco's wider EPR programme similarly focuses on investment in collection and recycling capacity while supporting initiatives designed to increase the value of plastic packaging after use.

### Construction demonstrates technical potential

The awards also showed that recycled plastic is moving into applications requiring durability and dimensional performance.

The Construction & Building Sector produced three Gold winners, all using recyclate supplied by Fenix

Rising. Buffalo Tanks won with the Demand Flush Cistern, while Fenix Rising received recognition for KayaX's KayaPod Duo and KayaSan Ablution Pod.

A Special Award for Technical Achievement went to the Plush Suede Renew Range. Adcock Consumer was the brand owner, Plastic Bubbles the producer and Myplas the recyclate supplier. The application uses polypropylene in a product requiring flexibility and colour performance.

These applications broaden the potential market for recycled polymers and reinforce the importance of product design in determining where recovered material can be used.

### MAK Plastics takes top award

MAK Plastics won the overall Best Recycled Plastic Product of the Year, while also receiving Gold for the BOPP Wash Basin in the Household & Leisure category and two Silver awards for the BOPP Storage Box and Corrugated PP Sheet.

Ozz Cash & Carry brought the BOPP Wash Basin to market, and RubyNova Plastics produced it using recyclate supplied by MAK Plastics. MAK Plastics' other partnerships included RubyNova Plastics, CoreFlute, Ozz Cash & Carry and Wave Paper.

For Bonstein, the achievement underlines the purpose of the awards: identifying businesses that can expand the market for recycled material.

"To give recycled material a fighting chance, you need innovation, companies putting it into new products and into places it hasn't been used before."

He added that the SAPRO Awards provide a platform for companies to demonstrate these applications to consumers and commercial markets.

### What the SAPRO Awards mean?

The 2026 SAPRO Awards indicate that South Africa's recycled plastics market is becoming increasingly dependent on end-market development, product innovation and collaboration across the plastics value chain.

For food and beverage manufacturers, this means recycled plastic should increasingly be considered not simply as a waste-management issue, but as part of packaging procurement, material selection and product development.

The commercial question is no longer only how much plastic South Africa can collect and recycle. It is also where that recycled plastic can be used, at what specification and at sufficient volume to create sustained market demand.

As South Africa's EPR system develops, the ability to convert recycled polymers into products that meet commercial and technical requirements will remain an important measure of progress towards a functioning circular plastics economy



[www.polyco.co.za](http://www.polyco.co.za)



## Mondi targets eCommerce flexibility and circularity

Pressure on food and beverage manufacturers to reduce packaging impacts, while managing shorter product cycles, is driving interest in packaging technologies that address material use, recyclability, and production flexibility at the same time. Mondi has responded with an award-winning packaging concept combining a corrugated outer box with recyclable, laser-marked flexible packaging for eCommerce and bag-in-box applications.

The concept was recognised with the German Packaging Award 2026 in the Sustainability category, reflecting the growing importance of packaging solutions that combine design for recycling with operational requirements such as shorter lead times, artwork flexibility and supply chain responsiveness.

For South African food and beverage manufacturers, where packaging must balance product protection, logistics, cost and end-of-life considerations, the development highlights how changes to the converting and decoration process can influence the wider packaging value chain.

### Laser marking removes conventional printing stages

A central element of Mondi's concept is laser marking technology, which applies artwork directly to flexible packaging during converting. Unlike conventional decorative printing, the process eliminates the requirement for printing plates.

This has implications for brands managing multiple stock-keeping units (SKUs), seasonal products or

frequent packaging changes. Artwork can be updated without producing new printing plates, potentially reducing the time required to introduce new designs or modify existing packaging.

For food and beverage companies operating in competitive markets, this can provide greater flexibility when launching products, responding to consumer preferences or managing shorter production runs.

The approach also moves packaging decoration into the broader discussion around design for recycling. By simplifying material structures and reducing decorative elements, Mondi says the concept can support packaging formats designed with recycling requirements in mind.

### Recyclable flexible packaging for different applications

The laser-marking concept is not restricted to a single packaging format. Mondi says it can be applied to reels and pre-made pouches, including its re/cycle StripPouch, as well as larger pre-made bags such as the re/cycle FlexiBag.



### One packaging partner for corrugated and flexible formats

Another aspect of the concept is integrating corrugated and flexible packaging expertise into one solution. The corrugated outer box provides structural protection for eCommerce distribution, while the flexible inner pack is designed for material efficiency and recyclability.

This combination is particularly relevant as eCommerce changes packaging requirements. Products moving through parcel networks can experience different

handling conditions from those transported through conventional palletised retail supply chains. Packaging therefore has to provide protection while avoiding unnecessary material and complexity.

Mondi's broader eCommerce portfolio reflects this focus, while its flexible packaging portfolio covers food, pet food, snacks and confectionery, beverages, home and personal care and other applications.

### Implications for South African food and beverage packaging

The technology has potential relevance to South African businesses looking at sustainable flexible packaging, recyclable food packaging and packaging design for recycling. However, adoption will depend on the availability of suitable converting technology, collection and recycling systems, regulatory requirements and the economics of each application.

Mondi's stated target applications extend beyond eCommerce to pet food, home and personal care, suggesting that the underlying technology could be adapted across several consumer product categories.

Jens Koesters, Manager Technical Service, R&D and Innovation, Mondi Consumer Flexibles, said: "Customers are under growing pressure to meet sustainability targets while managing increasingly complex product portfolios and changing consumer demands."

He added that the concept combines bio-based materials and artwork flexibility in a single solution, helping brands meet market requirements while progressing toward circularity goals.

The German Packaging Award recognition positions the concept within a wider shift towards packaging systems that consider material structure, decoration, production efficiency and end-of-life performance together. For the South African food and beverage sector, that integrated approach is increasingly relevant as manufacturers seek packaging that can meet commercial requirements while supporting circular economy objectives.

Mondi's re/cycle portfolio includes mono-material flexible packaging designed for recycling in line with relevant industry guidelines. Its FlexiBag range, for example, includes PE-based structures and is available with different thicknesses, barrier properties, closures and constructions. PCR content can also be incorporated where required.

This flexibility is relevant to food and beverage applications where packaging requirements differ according to product characteristics, filling process, shelf-life expectations and distribution conditions.

The StripPouch provides another example of Mondi's approach to reducing material use through flexible packaging. The company describes the PE-based mono-material pouch as designed for recycling, with construction that uses less material than rigid plastic bottles of equivalent volume.

## The approach also moves packaging decoration into the broader discussion around design for recycling.

### Bio-based materials and carbon reduction

The concept also allows for the incorporation of bio-based feedstocks or post-consumer recycled (PCR) content, depending on application requirements.

Mondi's internal Product Impact Assessment found significant CO<sub>2</sub> reductions for a bio-based, laser-marked StripPouch compared with a conventional fossil-based, printed and laminated polyethylene stand-up pouch. The comparison relates specifically to Mondi's stated product configurations and internal assessment methodology rather than representing a universal result for all flexible packaging.

This distinction is important for packaging decision-makers. Material selection, barrier requirements, conversion processes, transport distances and end-of-life infrastructure all influence the environmental performance of a packaging format.

For South African manufacturers, therefore, the potential of bio-based or recycled content needs to be assessed alongside local availability, food-contact requirements, production-line compatibility and recycling infrastructure.

[www.mondigroup.com](http://www.mondigroup.com)

# How FOLI broke the rules of condiment packaging

For South Africa's food and beverage manufacturers, packaging innovation is increasingly tied to differentiation, shelf visibility, material selection and consumer engagement. FOLI, a UK premium condiment brand founded by Nohra Currie, provides a case study in what can happen when packaging development starts outside conventional category thinking.

The brand emerged from Currie's dissatisfaction with commercially available salad dressings.

A Frenchwoman who grew up near Lyon, she was accustomed to making vinaigrette using fresh ingredients and olive oil. When she bought a prepared dressing, she questioned both its formulation and its packaging.

"I'm French, so I normally make my own salad dressing, and then I bought one, and it was just such a terrible salad dressing," states Currie.

She began researching the category and concluded that many products relied heavily on refined oil, sugar and water. Her response was to develop her own products, sourcing ingredients from Italy and Spain.

The initial range comprised Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Classic French Salad Dressing and Mature Balsamic Vinegar from Modena. Packaging development followed the product concept rather than preceding it.



Nohra Currie

## Rethinking conventional condiment packaging

Currie's supermarket research highlighted what she saw as a gap in premium condiment packaging. Bottles were primarily designed to contain and dispense the product, rather than to become part of the dining environment.

She drew inspiration from objects such as Le Creuset salt and pepper sets and asked why condiments couldn't play a similar role on the table.

That led to FOLI's central packaging concept: three sculptural glass bottles designed to interlock.

The bottles form a single visual composition when placed together while remaining individual packs when separated. Colour differentiates the products, while the physical connection between them



creates a collection-based proposition. FOLI's own product range currently includes interlocking glass bottles containing Extra Virgin Olive Oil, French Salad Dressing and Mature Balsamic Vinegar. The concept also provides a route for future SKU development. Additional bottles can be designed to integrate with the existing architecture, potentially allowing the packaging system to expand as the product portfolio grows.

For food and beverage companies exploring innovative packaging design, the significance lies in how the pack becomes part of the product proposition rather than functioning solely as a container.

## When packaging innovation meets manufacturing constraints

The design presented a significant technical challenge. Currie says she approached approximately 100 manufacturers across the UK, Europe and Asia. Aluminium was considered but could not deliver

the required form, while glass manufacturers raised concerns about stability, breakage, handling and pouring.

"It's not going to stand. It's going to break. You can't hold it. You're not going to be able to pour it because of the shape."

Eventually, one manufacturer agreed to attempt the design.

"Someone said, 'OK, I'll try. I can't promise you, but I'll try.'"

The experience highlights an important consideration for food and beverage packaging development: unconventional pack formats require close collaboration between brand owners, packaging designers, material suppliers and manufacturers.

For the South African market, where food manufacturers balance packaging cost, logistics, recyclability, production efficiency, and retail requirements, such development programmes need to assess manufacturability alongside brand differentiation from the outset.

### Packaging designed for the table

FOLI's packaging also challenges the conventional distinction between primary packaging and the consumer experience.

Currie observed customers physically interacting with the bottles in retail environments and subsequently keeping them visible in their kitchens. Some consumers have reportedly reused empty bottles as vases or refilled them.

This behaviour is commercially significant because it extends the relationship between packaging and consumer beyond the point of purchase.

Rather than being immediately discarded or stored in a cupboard, the pack becomes part of the kitchen or dining environment. That creates a potential model for premium food packaging that encourages reuse and long product life.

FOLI states that its packaging strategy includes glass bottles, lightweight recyclable aluminium caps, a flow reducer and recyclable cardboard outer packaging. The company also says the printed glass helps protect the contents from light and reduces the visibility of oil marks associated with clear bottles.

### From individual SKUs to a collection

The interlocking structure has also influenced purchasing behaviour.

According to Currie, some consumers buy one bottle first, then return for additional products, while others want the complete set immediately.

"They find that extremely satisfying because it's like a little collection. There aren't many brands where you feel you have to have the second product and the third product."

This approach creates a different commercial role for packaging. Instead of simply communicating brand identity and product information, the physical

structure can encourage consumers to build a product portfolio.

For food and beverage businesses, this has implications for multi-SKU packaging design, premiumisation and cross-selling. A packaging system can create a visual and physical connection between products, helping individual SKUs operate as components of a wider brand proposition.

### The advantage of approaching packaging as an outsider

Currie had no professional packaging background when she began developing FOLI.

"I knew nothing about packaging. I've done loads of things in my life, but never packaging."

Rather than starting with an established packaging brief, she began with her own experience as a consumer.

"I didn't have a brief, I didn't have a boss, I didn't have a client. I was starting from scratch."

That perspective enabled her to question conventions around condiment bottle shape, colour and presentation.

The lesson for food and beverage manufacturers is not necessarily to reject established packaging engineering principles. It is to distinguish genuine technical constraints from assumptions that have simply become standard practice.

Currie's approach was straightforward: "Create what you would buy yourself. Don't create something for someone else."

### What FOLI means for food packaging innovation

FOLI's packaging demonstrates how food packaging innovation can combine functionality, brand identity, consumer interaction and material considerations within a single system.

Its relevance extends beyond salad dressing. South African food and beverage brands operating in increasingly competitive categories can consider whether packaging is being treated only as a production requirement or as part of the product experience.

The challenge is to ensure that differentiation does not compromise food safety, supply-chain efficiency, recyclability, manufacturability or cost.

FOLI's story suggests that challenging packaging conventions can begin with a simple question: what should the consumer experience be, rather than what has the category traditionally produced?

For South African food packaging manufacturers and brand owners, that distinction could provide a useful starting point for the next generation of premium, reusable and recyclable food packaging solutions.

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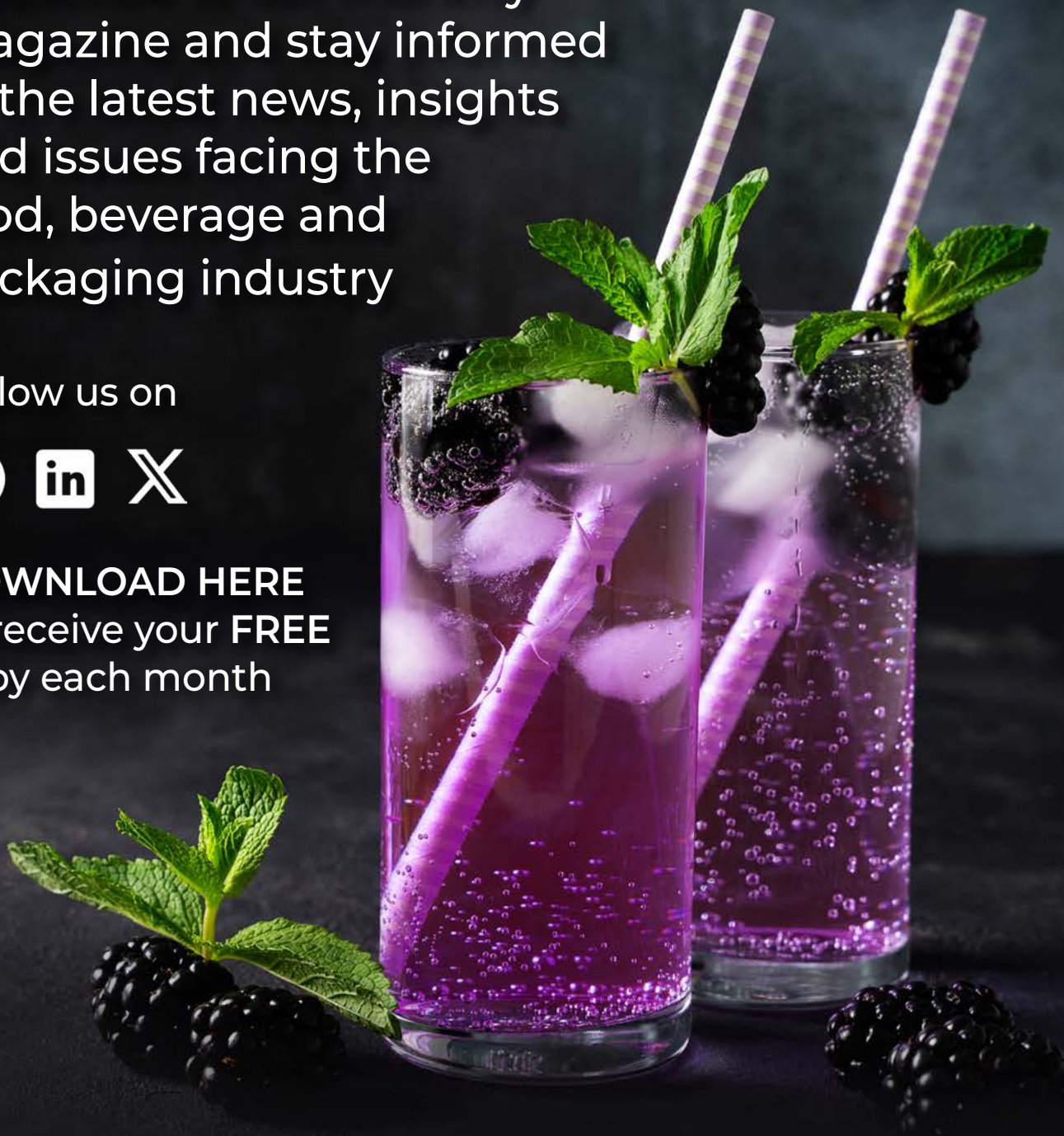
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