

THE CELEBRATION OF SAAFoST's 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Hopefully by now you know that SAAFoST was awarded the honour to host IUFoST 2010 which will be held in Cape Town from 22 - 26 August next year. The theme for the 15th World Congress of Food Science and Technology is "Food Science Solutions in an Evolving World." It is an eminently appropriate topic for a developing country where both food science and technology are thriving. We look forward to seeing you in South Africa next year at IUFoST 2010 where SAAFoST will also be celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Food science as a formal discipline in South Africa goes back to the 1950's. The Department of Food Science at the University of Stellenbosch was founded in 1952, making it one of the longest established of its type and, to put it in an historical perspective, older than the Food Science department of any UK university. Much of the initial focus of the food science profession was in the areas of fruit and cereals, areas in which South Africa has historically possessed huge natural resources. Formal research capability also grew with the development of government and industry supported research institutes in areas such as meat, fish, dairy products, sugar, wine, grain products and both deciduous and sub-tropical fruit. As the food industry expanded to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population, more commercially driven applied food R&D became an increasingly important part of the mix. Over the years the scope of the profession thus progressively expanded with food technology increasingly becoming a distinctive discipline in its own right due largely to the development of courses offered by the various Universities of Technology.

Looking at food science in South Africa in slightly more detail, there are three main areas of activity. The first grouping consists of the Academic Institutions. Excellent research capability exists at a number of universities, such as cereal science at the University of Pretoria (which has also been particularly successful in recruiting a diverse and vibrant postgraduate student body from throughout Africa) and at the University of Stellenbosch in areas such as fermentation and waste water treatment. The Universities of Technology have less of a research tradition but are taking steps to build capability with TUT (Tshwane University of Technology) leading the way in areas such as microbiological food safety.

Secondly, there are various food research institutes covering many food industry sectors such as grains and oilseeds, meat and dairy science

and deciduous, citrus and sub-tropical fruits. Some of these have world class capabilities but have suffered from reduced government and industry funding in recent years. Somewhat different is the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), a hugely diverse research organisation that operates on a mixture of government and industry funding. Their Bio-Sciences Division, based in Pretoria, combines food science and technology with a strong biotechnology capability.

Finally there is the purely commercial food science and technology practiced by most of the main participants in the food industry. The food industry in South Africa is comprised of many local companies, some of which are extremely large (Tiger Brands, the Pioneer Group, AVI Ltd., Foodcorp, the Tongaat Hulett Group, Illovo Sugar, Distell and SAB Miller) and these are complemented by most of the multinationals such as Cadbury-Schweppes, Coca-Cola, Danone, Kelloggs, McCain Foods, Kraft, Nestlé, Parmalat, Unilever and General Mills. The industry is serviced by a sizeable food ingredients capability and many multinational suppliers such as Danisco, DSM, Kerry Ingredients, IFF, Firmenich, McCormick, Symrise, and Givaudan have a strong local presence. The local food ingredients industry is somewhat less advanced with Tongaat Hulett Starch being the largest supplier to the industry. This combination of local and multinational companies results in a strong commercial food science and technology capability that has to cater for arguably one of the most diverse groups of consumers in the world.

The South African Association for Food Science and Technology (SAAFoST) was created in 1960 after a group of industry and academic representatives identified a need for a professional association for South African food scientists. The original association was founded in Cape Town but further branches were set up in Johannesburg in 1962 and then in Durban in 1973. From these small beginnings, SAAFoST has grown to become one of the most dynamic and well supported associations of its type in the world. It is entirely appropriate that the 50th anniversary of its foundation is to be marked in 2010 by the hosting of the 15th World Congress of Food Science and Technology in Cape Town and we are pleased to invite food scientists and technologists from throughout the world to join us in our celebrations!