

Webinar: Why food safety is everyone's business

In collaboration with *Business Day* Dialogues, South African National Accreditation System (Sanas) recently held a discussion highlighting the critical role accreditation plays in improving food safety. The discussion fell in line with the theme of this year's World Accreditation Day, which was 'Accreditation Improving Food Safety'.

Statistics indicate that more than 600 million people fall ill and more than 420,000 die prematurely as a result of foodborne illnesses, every year. Alarmingly, nearly a third of all foodborne deaths occur in children under the age of five. Not only does unsafe food have a public health impact, but it also has an economic impact as a result of losses in productivity and trade, costing the global economy around \$110bn every year.

Everyone's responsible

During a discussion moderated by Joanne Joseph, the University of Pretoria's Professor Lise Korsten explained that the definition of food safety is the assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended uses. She stressed that food safety is a responsibility shared by producers, manufacturers, retailers and the end consumer. Stressing that food safety and food security cannot be isolated from each other, Korsten said that South Africa cannot afford a food-borne outbreak amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

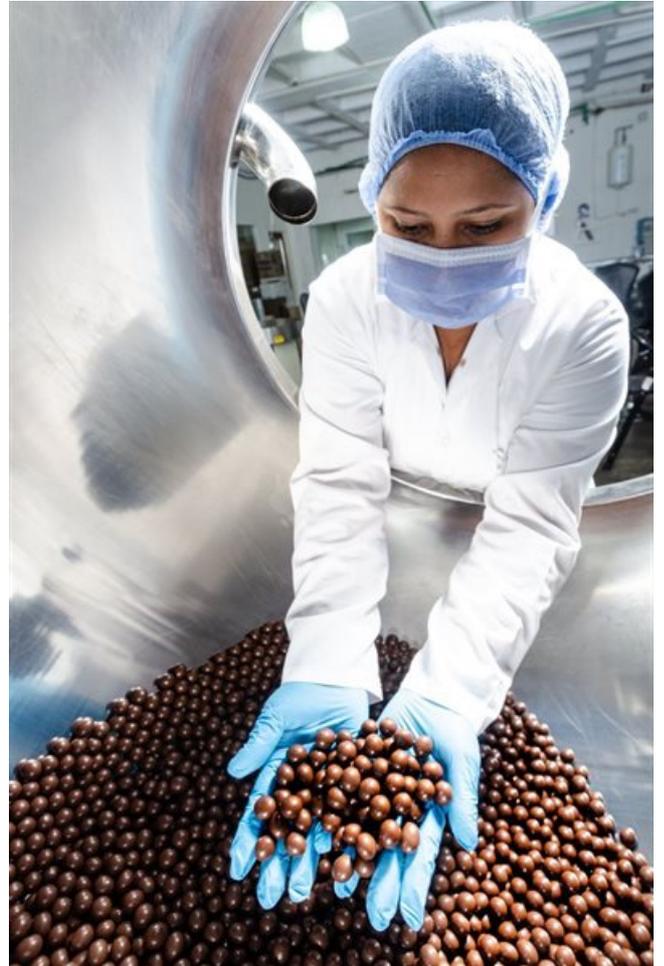


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Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. These two departments are responsible for food safety legislation and compliance with these legislations. To safeguard consumers, anybody who stores, manufactures or sells food products must have been assessed in terms of their compliance with hygiene regulations and must have a certificate of acceptability to operate.

The Department of Health's Penny Campbell explained that her department adopted a multi-faceted approach when tackling a food-related outbreak, which includes activating a response team to establish the cause of the outbreak, identifying the source and then identifying the responsible pathogen. Outbreaks are then used to inform the department in terms of how to adapt legislation.



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19 Sep 2017



The role of associations

While food safety regulation is quite fragmented in the country, industry associations play a useful role in terms of providing guidance to those in the industry as well as providing a unified voice to the government.

Established in 2016, Food Focus is an organisation that aims to make sense of compliance issues for the local food industry. In addition to providing the industry with comprehensive resources, it makes critical knowledge accessible in a way that is easily understandable and easy to implement. Food Focus co-founder Linda Jackson said there is a need for more education around food safety and what is required of those manufacturing or selling food.

Campbell agreed with Jackson, adding that it is virtually impossible for any country – even very developed economies – to completely avoid outbreaks but said that ensuring the right legislations are in place and that there is compliance and enforcement of these legislations is critical to ensure food safety.



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26 May 2020



“The Covid-19 pandemic has brought good food safety practices to the fore including the need to keep surfaces clean, separating raw and cooked food, keeping food at safe temperatures, cooking food thoroughly to destroy any possible pathogens, and using safe water and other ingredients. We need to ensure that we maintain these good habits even post the pandemic,” concluded Campbell.

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