

Connected and engaged consumers driving change in food and beverage industry

With the biennial food & drink technology Africa (fdt Africa) trade fair happening in Johannesburg in July this year, food and drink industry stakeholders said consumer pressure, along with more challenging trading conditions and growing environmental awareness, were among the top change drivers in the sector for 2019.



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Joerg Thomas, managing director of KHS Manufacturers, said not only were more educated and connected consumers increasingly aware of the environmental impact of packaging, but they were also demanding healthier drinks and foods, and calling for less single-use packaging and more recyclable packaging to be used in products.

This, he said, was forcing a change in an industry already under pressure due to the sugar tax and overall lower consumer spend due to a tougher economy.

Maximise efficiencies for cost-efficient production

“The sugar tax is a challenge that is forcing manufacturers to take alternative routes, reformulate their products and come to market with healthier products. Even major manufacturers are feeling pressure due to lower consumption, which impacts the entire value chain,” he said.

Emmanuel Rurema, business development director at global water treatment company Pentair, notes that consumer trends can be highly beneficial too. "We offer smart, sustainable solutions for the brewing industry, which is currently enjoying a significant growth phase across the continent," he says. "Particularly in large and growing economies such as Nigeria, manufacturers find that they need to continually grow capacity to keep up with demand from the growing population."

But, notes Rurema, controlling costs, maintaining standards and meeting demand for environmentally-friendly products are crucial. "A good brand is not enough. Manufacturers need to maximise efficiencies for cost-efficient production, while also ensuring consistency of quality and focusing on sustainability and green source optimisation."

Thomas said key issues likely to feature prominently at fdt Africa 2019, which will be co-located with IFAT Africa, were manufacturing efficiencies, the total cost of ownership, and the reduction and recyclability of packaging materials.

Eco-friendliness and the reduction of single-use packaging

Suzette Scheepers, CEO of Messe Muenchen South Africa, agrees: "Eco-friendliness and the reduction of single-use packaging has become a top of mind issue among consumers around the world. At the same time, global manufacturers are pressured to innovate, bring more variety to market, and to do so more efficiently and cost-effectively."

fdt Africa, which traditionally attracts around 111 local and international exhibitors and around 1,600 visitors from 81 countries, will be co-located with analytica Lab Africa and IFAT Africa at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Johannesburg from 9-11 July 2019.

This broader event, expected to draw up to 6,000 visitors, will highlight the trends and challenges across the food & drink manufacturing, water, sewage, refuse and recycling, and laboratory technology sectors, and will showcase the latest international solutions. For more information, click [here](#).

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