

IGA partners with Unitrade to expand to SA

CHICAGO, US / JOHANNESBURG, SA: IGA has announced that it will continue to advance its global presence by partnering with Johannesburg-based Unitrade Management Services (UMS) to bring the IGA brand back to South Africa. IGA originally moved into South Africa in 2002, but there have been no IGA stores in the country since 2008.



Unitrade is an independent management services group that provides a range of products and services that allow independent grocery retailers to compete effectively against corporate chains in the South African marketplace. Under the partnership with IGA, Unitrade's 110 Powertrade, Food Town and Best Buy grocery brands will adopt the IGA brand, and Unitrade has committed to growing its IGA store count to 250 stores within the next five years.

Unitrade CEO Jad Pereira says the synergy between Unitrade and IGA made the decision to cement the partnership between the two companies a logical conclusion. "Unitrade and IGA have a shared vision to assist independent retailers with building strong and successful businesses. The partnership of Unitrade brands and IGA's globally recognised brand will create a formidable power, enabling Unitrade to stay ahead in the local market and increase our ability to remain competitive in global best practice, which is particularly significant when looking at the international competition that has entered our market" Pereira said.

Plenty of promise

IGA Inc CEO Mark Batenic agrees, stressing that IGA's global presence is strongly complemented by the addition of Unitrade to the IGA family. "We are very pleased to welcome Unitrade as a member of IGA. It goes without saying that we see lots of promise in this new member company, which embodies the entrepreneurial spirit and community commitment that is the hallmark of IGA around the world. We look forward to working with Jad Pereira and his team to bring the IGA brand back to South Africa, and to introduce IGA to new countries and communities in Africa as Unitrade expands its IGA footprint."

The Unitrade/IGA partnership will also provide Unitrade with even stronger relationships with multinational manufacturers and suppliers, while allowing the company to stay loyal to its South African roots and communities.

Additional partnership benefits include access to resources such as brand-building programmes, information on the latest international retail trends, community marketing initiatives, consumer reward programs, store branding standards and guidelines, store format expansion, sales strategies to defend against competition, access to IGA's private label product line and customised training and people development through the IGA Coca-Cola Institute.

Training academy to give members competitive edge

Drawing on the IGA Coca-Cola Institute training resource, Unitrade will be rolling out in South Africa the Unitrade Academy, a training school that will offer comprehensive classroom and online training, with courses that will be aligned with South African standards authorities NQF (National Qualifications Framework) levels and registered with the South African Wholesale & Retail Sector Education and Training Authority.

"The Unitrade Academy will give Unitrade members a highly competitive edge. This is one of the most dynamic initiatives we have launched to date and we believe that our members will take the opportunity to give their employees skills and knowledge that will entrench their competitive advantage among independent retailers and wholesalers in South Africa," Pereira said.

The Independent Grocers Alliance (IGA) is the world's largest voluntary supermarket network with aggregate worldwide retail sales of more than US\$31bn per year. The Alliance includes nearly 5,000 Hometown Proud IGA independent supermarkets worldwide, supported by 36 distribution centres and more than 55 major manufacturers, vendors and suppliers encompassing everything from grocery to equipment items. IGA has operations in 46 of the United States and 28 countries, commonwealths and territories.

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