

23. LEGISLATION

FLAG/SAFSAC

In 1978 Dr Arno Visser (a Council member) being aware of the shortcomings of the food legislation system mentioned this to the Member of Parliament for Malmesbury. As a result, they, with Dr P van Twisk, visited the Minister of Health and the Director of Food Control (Dr Swanepoel). SAAFoST proposed the formation of an advisory group. The outcome was the formation, in 1979, of the South African Food Standards Advisory Council (SAFSAC) to review proposed changes to food legislation and provide comments and recommendations to the Department prior to promulgation. SAAFoST, along with other interested parties, was represented on this council. The arrangement was not entirely successful and, by 1984, SAFSAC had ceased to exist.

In 1986 Dr Gert Stevens, the new director, was approached by SAAFoST and in 1987 he founded the Food Legislation Advisory Group (FLAG) which has functioned successfully to the present day (2010). SAAFoST has been represented on FLAG by Peter Bush and, subsequently, by Ron Timm (who was followed by Owen Frisby).

The former Director of Food Control Dr Theo van der Venter penned the following in regard to FLAG:

“The Food Legislation Advisory Group (FLAG) is a non-statutory body that advises the Director: Food Control of the Department of Health on matters relating to the regulation of food safety and food labelling.

It was established in the late 1980s, with two basic objectives:

- To improve relations with the food industry and other stakeholders by means of a consultative process.
- To make use of external expertise to complement the expertise within the Department.

Effective consultation in the preparation of proposed draft regulations long before they are published for general comment greatly facilitates the wide acceptance of such regulations, while also ensuring that the primary objective of protecting and enhancing consumer health is achieved.

FLAG normally meets twice a year, although activities such as those of subcommittees continue unabated between formal meetings of the parent body. Membership of FLAG is by invitation, with members attending meetings at own expense and in their own time. The Directorate: Food Control highly appreciates the contributions of FLAG members, some of whom regularly travel from as far as Cape Town and Durban to attend meetings.

FLAG members do not serve in their individual capacity. All members are from organisations that have been invited to nominate representatives. The wide spectrum of organisations that are represented on FLAG include the following:

Government: Department of Agriculture, Department of Trade and Industry, Provincial Departments of Health, SA Bureau of Standards.

Associations: Allergy Society, Association for Dietetics in South Africa, SA Association for Food Science and Technology, SA Association of Flavour and Fragrance Manufacturers, SA Savoury Snack Food Association, Nutrition Society, SA Sugar Association.

Industry: Consumer Goods Council of SA, SA Chamber of Baking, National Chamber of Milling, SA Grain Council.

Research: Agricultural Research Council, Council for Industrial and Scientific Research. Academic; University of Stellenbosch.

Consumers: SA National Consumer Union

Other: Food Advisory Consumer Service, International Life Sciences Institute.

Other stakeholders that are not formal members of FLAG make important contributions towards the activities of various subcommittees. In past years, some of these subcommittees have been chaired by persons that are not officers of the Department of Health. Members of FLAG, as well as members of the subcommittees, have over the years made numerous and important contributions to the food regulations that are currently in force or are under preparation.

The activities of FLAG run parallel, and are closely related, to those of the National Codex Committee and the efforts of the Directorate: Food Control in its role as National Contact Point for Codex”

SACNASP

In 1985 SAAFoST was recognised as a voluntary association by the South African Council for Natural Scientists (SACNAS). This body came into being as a result of the promulgation of the Natural Scientist’s Act 55 of 1982. The objective of the act is “To promote the practice of natural science professions in South Africa, exercise control over the standard of professional conduct of professional natural scientists, monitor the standard of education and training of natural scientists and to recognise education and training which is a prerequisite for registration in terms of the Act.”

This Act was replaced by the Natural Scientific Professions Act 106 of 1993 and the acronym became SACNASP. Later, Act 27 of 2003 brought SACNASP in line with developments in higher education. Official recognition of voluntary associations is valid for five years and SAAFoST’s recognition of was last renewed in 2009 due to the fact that it complied with the requirements set by SACNASP in terms of Section 29 of the Act. Professor Pieter Marais, Vice President of SACNASP, addressed members on ‘The registration of Natural Scientists in SA – implications for professionals and their employers’ on 14 September 2004. Mr. Andries de Klerk of SACNASP subsequently addressed Northern Branch members on the National Scientific Professions Act in August 2009.