



# 2015 SAAFoST Congress



## Local Speaker

**Nigel Sunley** will be speaking at the  
SAAFoST Congress in Durban in September.

Nigel's topic is **Food safety versus nutrition – are the priorities right?**

There can be little doubt that food safety and the nutritional quality of foods and diets are the biggest single global issues facing food scientists and technologists in the current environment. However it can be argued that such is the volume of activity carried out in the area of food safety in the last few years that we are starting to suffer from overkill in this area and that the food industry is drowning under the weight of systems, procedures and general bureaucracy related to safety issues.

While our food is unquestionably safer than it was, the law of diminishing returns is surely starting to apply. It is also true that food safety activities are aimed at preventing individual undesirable events for individual foods and that these are relatively isolated in their occurrence. Nutritional content, however, is an issue applicable to all foods at all times irrespective of their safety status and the reality is that the nutritional status of foods has a far greater overall effect in the longer term on public health and public perceptions of food than the short-term furore that results from individual food safety transgressions, however, high profile and unpleasant these may be. Furthermore, regulatory authorities are focussing increasingly on nutritional issues and placing an ever increasing burden on the food industry in this area. This paper will therefore argue that food researchers in the academic and commercial fields should look seriously at re-prioritising nutritional issues in relation to food safety issues. There is a strong case for putting food safety research into more of a "maintenance mode" that will still ensure a speedy and professional response to any new issues and ensure that the existing necessary precautions and systems are implemented in those areas where they may be lacking but without dumping further complex requirements on food producers, while simultaneously re-focusing research priorities on improving the nutritional quality of food and working with the nutrition profession to improve the quality of dietary intake.

### About Nigel

Nigel has a BSc (Hons) in Chemistry from the University of Leeds and an MSc in Food Science from the University of Natal. He has spent 32 years in the food industry in the UK and South Africa and his experience includes periods in both the R& D and manufacturing functions with both South African and multinational food companies. He started his own consulting business, Sunley Consulting, in 2007 based in Johannesburg, South Africa. His consulting work covers a very wide range of areas, but he specialises in the development of nutritionally enhanced food products and the management of food regulatory issues locally and internationally.

Nigel is a past president of the South African Association for Food Science & Technology (SAAFoST) and was made an Honorary Life Member of the association in 2013. He chaired the organising committee for the 15<sup>th</sup> IUFOST World Congress of Food Science & Technology that was held in Cape Town in August 2010. He was a member of the global Governing Council of IUFOST from 2010-2014 and now acts as a special advisor to IUFOST. He was elected to the IUFOST International Academy of Food Science and Technology in 2014. He is a longstanding and passionate advocate of collaboration between the food science and nutrition and dietetics professions and currently chairs the joint liaison committee between these two disciplines in South Africa on behalf of ICSU (International Council of Scientific Unions).

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