

### 3. IN THE BEGINNING

In *Food Industries of South Africa*, Volume 1, No. 6 (1948) the Editor, Dr HB Cronshaw, wrote that great importance was being attached to Food Science and Technology training and research by practically every country in the world. However, in South Africa, there was a lack of any indication that the local situation was to be remedied, and what few facilities there were, were very fragmented.

Tony Lewis<sup>1</sup>, of FIRI/I&J remarked that members of the South African Institute of Refrigeration (SAIR) felt that a Food Technology section should be formed as part of their institute. When this was mentioned to Dr. Guido Dreosti of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Fishing Industries Research Institute (FIRI) in 1956, Professor Dreosti asked them to hold off as he recognised that a separate Association for Food Science and Technology would be more appropriate.

On 28 November 1960, a group consisting of Dr. GM Dreosti, Mr L Ginsburg (Western Province Fruit Research Inst.), Mr GG Knock (Metal Box), Mr JC Schoonens (Deep Freezing and Preserving) and Professor CJB Smit (University of Stellenbosch) addressed a letter and questionnaire to some 150 firms and individuals who might have had an interest in a Food Science and Technology organisation. SAAFoST has always considered this act of inspiration in 1960 as the moment of its birth.

The approach resulted in some 100 replies and a meeting of 46 interested individuals on 7 March 1961 held at the Chemistry Lecture Theatre, UCT. The group who met on 28 November (with the addition of Dr L Gorfinkel and Professor RI Nel) were elected as a working committee to establish the association. Dr. Dreosti, Professor Smit, and Messers Knock, Ginsburg, Schoonens and Lewis formed the Constitution Committee with Mr Lewis of FIRI and Irvin and Johnson, as secretary. They based the constitution on that of the SAIR.



This committee also applied for membership of the Athenaeum (pictured), which was granted. This was a boon because it gave the fledgling association its first home; a place where it could hold small meetings in a central location.

At a second meeting of the group of interested individuals on 5 June 1961, Dr Dreosti presented an address titled "Exchange of Ideas in the Field of Food Science and Technology."

On 3 August 1961 the inaugural meeting of the South African Association for Food Science and Technology (SAFST) was held and was attended by 42 prospective members. The draft constitution was adopted and the meeting elected a committee consisting of Dr GM Dreosti (Chairman), Mr GG Knock and Dr RI Nel (Vice-Presidents), Mr BK Nortje (Treasurer), Mr LG Ginsburg, Mr JG Schoonens, Mr AM Lewis, Dr L Gorfinkel, Mr JP de Wit with Professor CJB Smit as Secretary. Membership at this stage had reached 95. "Food Industries of South Africa" (FIOSA), which had a national circulation, was appointed as the official journal of the association.

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● Encouraging Attendance ●

**FIRST MEETING OF  
FOOD TECHNOLOGY  
ASSOCIATION HELD  
LAST MONTH**

THERE was an encouraging attendance of 45 people from a variety of industrial and research organisations in the Cape at the first meeting of the South African Association of Food Science and Technology which was held on the 7th March at 9 p.m. in the Chemistry lecture theatre of the University of Cape Town.

Dr. G. M. Dreosti was in the chair and opened a discussion on the scope of the Association. It was decided that all phases of food science and technology in its widest sense would be covered and that the association would cater to all interested parties.



Some of the industrialists and scientists who attended the inaugural meeting of the Association of Food Technology are shown above seated in the Chemistry Lecture Theatre at the University of Cape Town. Below are from left: J. G. Schoonens, C. J. B. Smit, G. M. Dreosti, L. Ginsburg, I. J. Burger, K. A. Oettle, R. I. Nel and G. G. Knock, who were all present at the meeting.

Dennis Wright, was at the inaugural meeting. He wrote, "The aims of SAFST were very encouraging, and I, and no doubt others, looked forward to regular meetings at which we could get together with our friends in the industry as well as listening to interesting topics presented by experts. There were very few meetings in the early years and this was a problem for me. I stayed a member for about eight years but then gave up, only to rejoin in 1984 after moving to the Transvaal and having been persuaded to do so by Aubrey Parsons.

There was a meeting in November 1961 that consisted of a panel of experts answering questions on aspects of Food Science. Mr AM Lewis chaired the meeting and the panel consisted of DSW Burrow, GG Knock, Mike Lamprechts, PS Malan, RJ Nachenius and Eli Shapiro – the latter a UCT contemporary of mine.”

On 24 July 1962, the **first Annual General Meeting** of the association was held at UCT. A new constitution, allowing for the formation of branches of the association, was adopted. This was also the date of the **inaugural Cape Branch meeting** at which Professor CJB Smit was elected Chairman, Mr AM Lewis (Vice-Chairman), Dr BH Koeppen (Secretary) and Mr BK Nortje (Treasurer), with Mr GG Knock, Dr L Gorfinkel, Mr L Ginsburg, Mr EA Shapiro and Mr NC Goosen as committee members.

On 29 November 1962, Mr Jan de Wit, Assistant Director of the National Nutrition Research Institute (NNRI) at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), in Pretoria, called a meeting of interested persons in the North. Dr Dreosti addressed the meeting and it was decided to form the Northern Branch of the association. The committee was elected under the chairmanship of Mr de Wit. The growth of the Northern Branch was slow at first, but really came of age in the early 70’s after the second Biennial Congress was held in Pretoria in 1972.

The inauguration of the Natal Branch took place on 13 June 1973 under the able guidance of Professor HJH de Muelenaere (Food Corporation R&D Laboratories in Umbilo and later at the University of Natal), thereby establishing the third branch.

In 1978 a Fermentation Specialist Group was formed by the Northern Branch but was disbanded in 1985 due to lack of support.

The constitution makes provision for Student Chapters and, to date, only two have ever been formed – the first was in the Cape and the second in Natal in 1994. However, they both existed for a relatively short period.

The main activity of branches (which are the active centres of the association) is the organisation of regular lectures which are sometimes more frequent if there is an overseas visitor who could be asked to lecture on his or her speciality. Branches take turns in



organising Biennial Congresses. From reports in the *Food Industries of South Africa* it was evident that monthly lectures started as early 1962 and were held regularly thereafter. It is intriguing to see that some of the early meetings consisted of question and answer sessions. The first panel of experts was Messrs

Lewis (Chairman), Burrow, Knock, Lambrechts, Malan, Nachenius and Shapiro. The questions and answers were reported in detail in *Food Industries of South Africa*. Reading them some 50 years later, one has to acknowledge that these panellists (besides being bold) were very knowledgeable. It appears that, at that time, scientists shared their knowledge very freely and did not appear to be overly restricted by concerns of confidentiality of intellectual property.

**IN ORDER TO GIVE BOTH BRANCHES OF THE DAY EQUAL COVERAGE SOME INFORMATION ON EARLY CAPE BRANCH ACTIVITIES IS NEEDED TO MATCH THAT BELOW ON THE NORTHERN BRANCH**

In a note from Dr Pieter van Twisk on the Northern Branch he wrote:

“The Northern Branch was formed in 1962, some two years after the association was established. Initially support for lecture evenings was pathetic. A lecture evening where 12 people attended was judged to be a big success.

When I was branch secretary, I used to buy two packets of biscuits after work (normally Choice Assorted) on my way to the meeting which was usually held at Tuks (University of Pretoria) but not at the Department of Food Science, because it did not exist at that time. During question time I would switch on the urn and make tea.

We tried one meeting in Johannesburg but it was a dismal failure – only seven people attended.

All this changed when the late Dr Hildegard Ballschmieter of the Division of Food Technology, CSIR, and a member of the Northern Branch Committee, suggested dinner/lecture evenings (I was Chairman at that stage). These attracted industry members and the Northern Branch then became the bigger branch. What also helped with the growth of the Northern Branch was the formation of the Food Science Department at the University of Pretoria (UP). The organisation of the 1979 Congress at the Rand Show Grounds by Dr Gerard van Noort added further impetus to the growth of the branch.”