



## SAAFoST Presidents Biennial General Meeting Report, 7 September 2015

The last two years have been more about consolidation of who we are as SAAFoST; the value we offer our members; bedding down of the recent major initiatives started by the past two presidents, namely FST and the SAAFoST Foundation.

At a strategy meeting last year it emerged clearly that we as SAAFoST are relevant still and to the future generation of the food industry. Our challenge is to communicate with our membership to entrain their active involvement and obtain the younger generation's buy-in to carry the baton into the future. It also emerged clearly that all voluntary organisations are suffering the stress of the modern world of struggling to communicate using all the relevant media forms to reach both young and older generations. Apart from communication within, there is a need to reach out to other specialist affiliated organisation bodies that are naturally under the SAAFoST umbrella of interest. This presents an opportunity to increase critical mass required for both SAAFoST and other affiliated bodies to co-operate on diaries, events and fund raising. There are active engagements on this front and they will be carried forward. As mundane as they may sound, the fact remains that they are important to our future. This sentiment resonates with the various specialist organisations that have supported these efforts of engagement to date.

At the 2015 Biennial Congress there is an initiative called "MySAAFoST" to reach out to the younger SAAFoST members, particularly requesting the active involvement of SAAFoST foundation beneficiaries to play a leadership role in owning the 'SAAFoST of the present and the future'. There are basic pools of "need states" that exist within the SAAFoST sociosphere. SAAFoST activities create a portal to bring these, "need states", together for reciprocal benefit. The younger generation have to gain working industry knowledge within South Africa, become known, grow in their careers. The senior generation seek succession planning for leaders in their own organisations, markets for their products, and enjoy the pleasure of sharing knowledge and their own life experiences. Through the various resources and activities within SAAFoST, this portal of sharing is facilitated. FST, branch events, biennial congresses, seminars, the SAAFoST Foundation and the SAAFoST website are such facilitators.

The challenge to the food industry is to believe in SAAFoST as important enough a professional and industry-oriented body to support it financially through Custodian Membership and ensuring the individual membership and participation of their employees. This needs to be constantly and increasingly communicated to industry to obtain involvement. SACNASP Registration (not Continuous Professional Development) is legally mandatory for all food science professionals and is further reason for industry to insist on their employees participating in SAAFoST and registering with SACNASP, especially in an age of increasing litigation and the need for true science professionals.

The trade-off is easy:

Q: why would I participate in SAAFoST as a young food professional?

A: It is the place I will learn to map the food industry in South Africa and understand it's fit within a bigger global picture; I will gain knowledge and influence; I will lead and become a recognised leader within my food science profession; I will increase my career opportunities and networking within the industry.

Q: why would I participate in SAAFoST as a senior food professional all these years later and still give it my time?

A: it is the place where I will find future leaders for my business, as I see young food professionals demonstrating their work ethics, leadership, team participation and passion. Those are the people I want to employ and engage within business.

As outgoing president I want to thank Council, the Immediate Past President (Gunnar Sigge), Treasurer (Rosie Maguire, a past president), the Branch Committees, the Executive Director (Owen Frisby), Membership Development Officer (Irene Burke), FST Editor and Producer (Tricia Fitchet), SAAFoST Foundation trustees (under chairman, David Watson, also a SAAFoST Past President) for their passion, dedication and time for this esteemed organisation of which I am proud to be part and honoured to have played a role in.

Ryan Ponquett  
President (2013 . 2015)