



Presidents Report BGM 29 August 2023

Prof Elna M. Buys

SAAFoST is an extraordinary organisation built on: the fulfillment of a safe, nutritious, and sustainable food supply that is inextricably linked to science and innovation. As a professional food science community, our contribution is only as significant as our ability to collectively articulate a vision, promote and defend sound science, and be a substantial, objective, and reliable voice for the global food system. This is who we are and what we do.

As I contemplate the end of two years as President of SAAFoST, I am optimistic about our Association's future, profession, and ability to realize our vision. We are living in a time of concerning trends. We are all very aware of the myriad impacts on our food supply. In the past two years, I have had the privilege of viewing SAAFoST from a perspective few have the opportunity to hold. I have seen the impact we have, large and small. I have seen up close the challenges of a nonprofit organization and how we meet the challenges due to the commitment of the Council and EXCO members. After working with such a group of amazing people dedicated to SAAFoST and the contributions the association is making, I am very optimistic about the value and future of our Association.

Value proposition

We felt that it was time to revisit the SAAFoST value proposition and emphasize the relevance of the Association post-COVID. Prof Gunnar Sigge and team put together a revised proposition highlighting Leadership and Career Development Opportunities, Strategic Networking, Access to Scientific Resources, Career Networking and Educational support.

Management

Council recently welcomed Ingrid Woodrow as our new CEO, and we wish her every success. We have seen significant impact in our day-to-day management. Ingrid has also made great strides in connecting with our Custodian members. Prof Arno Hugo was co-opted to Council to represent the Free-State region and he initiated a number of SAAFoST events. SAAFoST also made a submission on the draft Labelling Regulations R3337 published on 21 APRIL 2023. Great appreciation to our CEO and the review by Nigel Sunley and colleagues at University of Pretoria. Thank you to Susan Featherstone for her contribution during her brief time as CEO. We acknowledge the passing of a valued Honorary Life member, Bernard Cole.

Expert Workshop Series

We initiated an expert workshop series with three remarkably successful workshops being conducted. These were well supported focusing on Predictive Food Modelling, Extrusion and Smart Foods. We had international experts contributing to each of these sessions.

Webinars

We continued our excellent webinars program, led by Irene Burke, Membership Officer, assisted by Tsetse Baloyi, Communications Officer as well as the Branch committees. These really contributed to SAAFoST's continuous connection with our members especially during 2022 – as COVID came to an end. A notable example was the AIFST – SAAFoST webinar with Fiona Fleming and Nigel Sunley. Great appreciation to the contributors and speakers and to those who took the time to support these sessions.

Finances

SAAFoST has not recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic and from the loss made at Congress 2021. Delays in payments and non-payment of membership fees affected the Association significantly. Although the management team has made extraordinary attempts to improve the situation and we have seen results, the extent of outstanding membership fees remains a concern. We received an anonymous donation, which assisted the Association to continue fulfilling its obligation to the SAAFoST Foundation. Fixed expenses remain significant, with the highest costs being three employees, secretarial costs, FST running costs and the Food Advisory Consultancy Services (FACS). During 2022 the Association developed a Financial Policy, which was ratified by Council.

Membership

Our online membership registration and payment system became active and is working effectively. From 2023 onwards, students do not qualify for free-membership and 145 students continued their membership during 2023. Every effort has been made to reconnect with local members and motivate all to rejoin or join SAAFoST during the past year, as it became clear that many members have changed contact details, moved overseas or did not become members after their student years.

SAAFoST Foundation

The Foundation continues to be one of SAAFoST greatest initiatives. There is a need for the number of bursaries received from companies to increase. Janusz Luterek will provide more detail at the BGM.

FST Magazine

In an attempt to increase the visibility of SAAFoST and readership of FST, the magazine is now available to any interested party. FST regularly carries articles by Custodian companies. We are incredibly grateful for the voluntary contributions made to FST by the Custodians. Thank you to Tricia Fitchet for maintaining high quality content and presentation.

MySAAFoST

MySAAFoST continues to go from strength-to-strength and was under the leadership of Dr Nwabisa Mehlomakulu and Shanece Ramkisson. Several activities, a Food Recall activity and Food Waste Infographic competition was well attended. Several activities have been planned for the SAAFoST 2023 Congress.

Acknowledgements

Finally, I would like to thank Council for their outstanding efforts and contributions. The last 2 years have been challenging, but the involvement and effort from all of you is greatly appreciated. I wish the new Council great successes. And to our new President, Prof Riette de Kock, I wish you all the best.

I am incredibly grateful that I have had this unique, memorable experience. I am looking forward to seeing what we will accomplish next—together.

Thank you!