

**BARCODING, LABELLING, SCANNING & RFID**

# Food for Thought

**With the new Regulations relating to the Labelling and Advertising of Foodstuffs (R146 of 1 March 2010) being introduced, manufacturers have to seriously review the way in which they've labelled products in the past.**

Supply Chain Today" spoke to Yolandé van der Riet, nutritional specialist within the Food Safety Initiative (FSI) division at Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA), for some insight into the motivation behind the new Regulations, and how it will impact the local market.

The FSI – under the auspices of the CGCSA – is an industry association which renders a scientifically-based service to its members on food safety and nutrition matters. FSI members thus benefit from this expert knowledge, along with the opportunity to attend events such as the recent series of training courses addressing the mentioned Regulations. These courses are available to anyone with an interest in the subject.



Yolandé van der Riet

months is granted for implementation of the majority of regulations. Until then, both sets of Regulations (R2034 and R146) will be applicable, in other words, "the old and new regulations will run in parallel until 1st of March 2011, allowing companies time to get their ducks in a row." However, it should be noted that R2034 would still be utilised for the purposes of law enforcement until 1st March next year.

### Protecting the consumer

"A number of issues have been addressed, principally for the protecting and informing of the consumer," Yolandé continues. "For instance, the existing list of definitions has been extended, sections pertaining to allergens have been updated and stipulations in terms of nutrient content claims are more comprehensive. Every food manufacturer will now have to go back to their labels to see whether they comply or not."

The intention of the new Regulations is to provide consumers with the means to make informed food choices, as well as limiting the potential for misleading some consumers with information that is either accidentally or deliberately ambiguous. "The Department of Health wants to ensure that all claims on labels are truthful and have sufficient substantiation" explains Yolandé. "The Consumer Protection Act will most probably also drive this and consumers will become more aware of what they consume."

### There were various loopholes that needed to be closed

#### Revised regulations

According to Yolandé, the updated Regulations have been in the pipeline for some time. "This is a revision of R.2034/1993 of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act (Act 54 of 1972)," she tells us. "It was implemented in '93, but the Department of Health has since realised there were various loopholes that needed to be closed in order to align it with international protocols and scientific research." Some of the provisions in the new Regulations also relate to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Food Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity & Health – an international initiative aimed at the improvement of human health worldwide.

"Although the revisions were introduced on 1st of March 2010, a commencement period of 12



**Updated rules**

According to information available on the Department of Health website ([www.doh.gov.za](http://www.doh.gov.za)), new labels will be required to indicate “Use by” dates to maintain food safety by avoiding microbial growth due to decay. “Best before” dates will be mandatory for non-perishables to ensure optimum freshness of these products.

The DOH adds that consumer health will also be protected by the inclusion of a declaration of common food allergens. In addition to this, labels will need to provide information about the contents of the product, such as colourants and preservatives. If labelling information is checked for correctness, for example by an inspector, producers will be required to support the validity thereof within 48 hours.

**Saying that your brand of rooibos tea is caffeine-free is confusing since all rooibos teas are generally caffeine free**

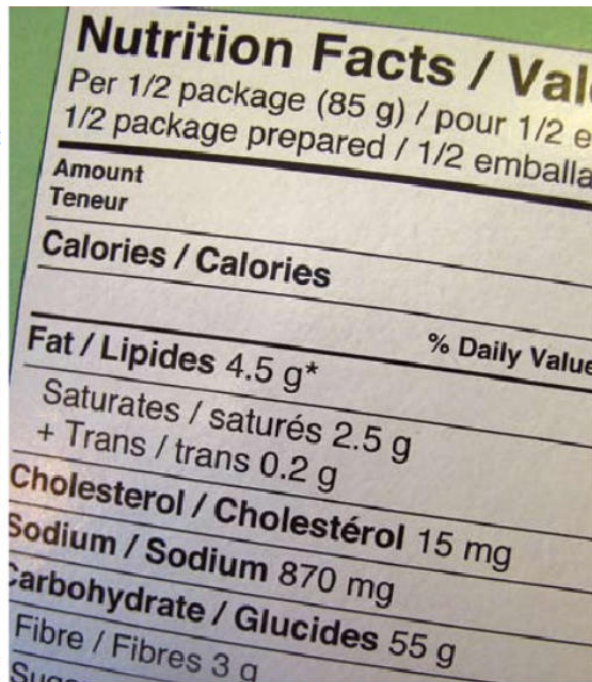
The DOH further stipulates that in instances where emphasis is placed on a specific ingredient, such as olive oil in margarine for example, manufacturers will be expected to provide Quantitative Ingredient Declarations (QUID) to indicate percentages of the ingredient indicated. Comparative claims, such as “low fat” vs “reduced fat” will come under scrutiny too.

Returning to an FSI perspective, Yolandé continues, saying: “We’ll also be seeing closer attention paid to ‘negative’ claims. For example, saying that your brand of rooibos tea is caffeine-free is confusing since all rooibos teas are generally caffeine free.”

**Accountability**

“Each word and image should have real meaning and should be justifiable,” she tells us. “It should further be noted that the title of these Regulations refers to both labelling and advertising; thus being regarded as one entity. All players should be working towards providing honest and complete information so that the consumer can make healthy choices.”

The new Regulations form part of phase 1 of the initiative. The second phase of the process will most probably relate to further food labelling-related matters including the development of a nutrient profiling model suitable and applicable



Labels will provide consumers with information with which to make informed nutritional decisions



Companies will now need to validate advertising claims on packaging

to South African conditions. It might also address issues such as health claims on foodstuffs; serving sizes; and the Glycaemic Index (GI).

“Basically, the goal is to inform the consumer, protect the consumer, and also protect the manufacturer who has ensured accurate and honest labelling,” concludes Yolandé.

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