

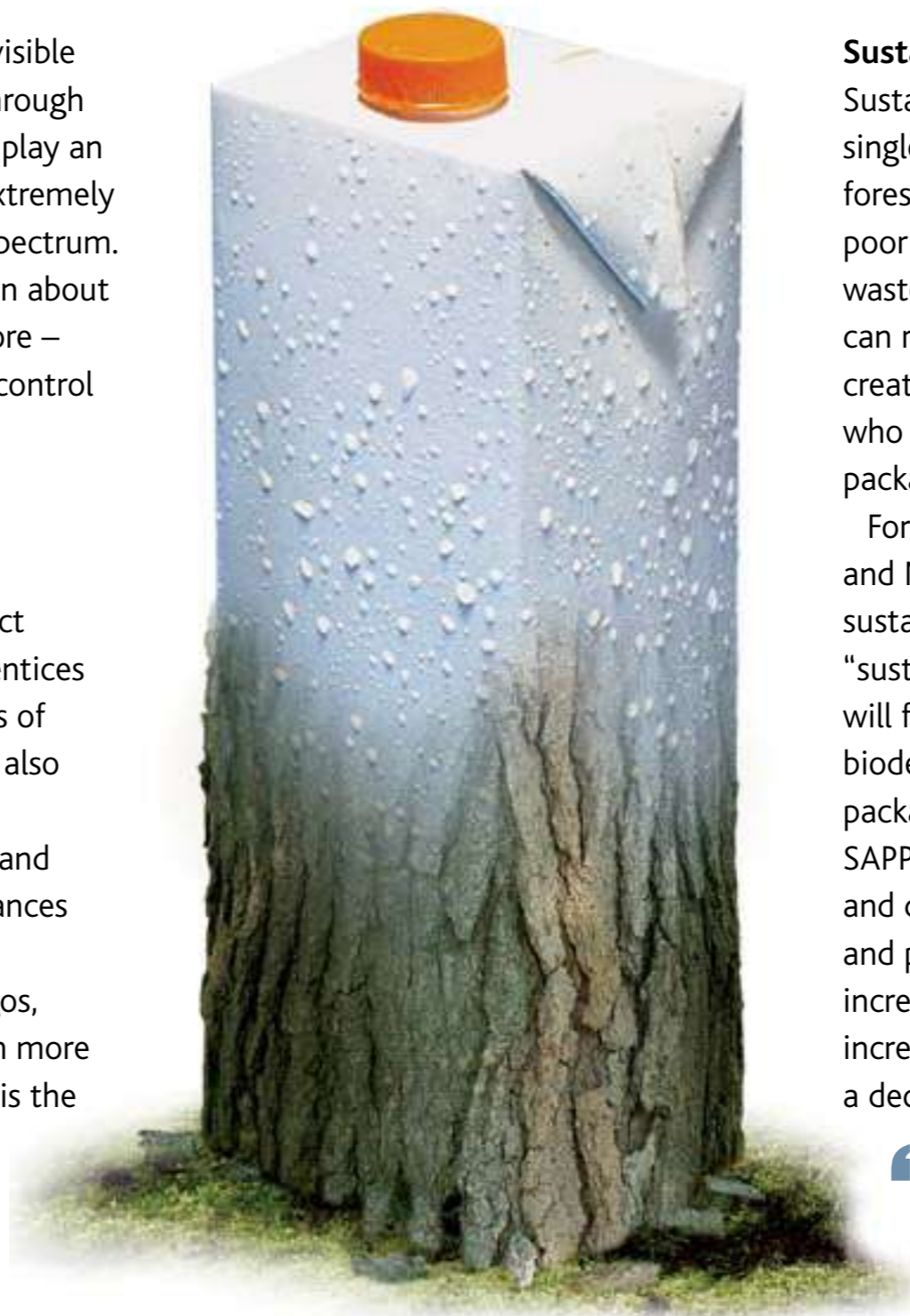
How technology, sustainability and consumer demand is driving innovation

Packaging, scales and labels are not the highly visible components of a store that entice shoppers through the door, but these industrious 'back end workers' play an integral role in the shopping experience and are extremely important across the entire retail and wholesale spectrum. Packaging and labelling transfer critical information about products and brands – and by implication your store – to shoppers, while scales play a vital role in stock control and a streamlined shopping experience.

Pack a punch with sustainable packaging

Consider packaging your in-store salesperson, direct marketer, and all-around Most Valuable Player. It entices and informs consumers and is one of the first lines of communication between brand and customer. It's also usually the first thing a consumer sees when they start their shop. It is visually alluring, informative, and protective, and of course is essential in many instances for food hygiene.

From design and production to branding and logos, packaging deserves careful consideration. But even more important, given the current environmental crisis, is the question of sustainable, renewable, and recyclable packing material, as more and more consumers are demanding sustainable packaging options.



Sustainable packaging

Sustainable packaging takes many forms, and yet single-use plastics still abound. Unsustainable forestry practices can ruin entire eco-systems, poor production practices can result in excessive waste and pollution, and overwhelmed landfills can render compostable packaging irrelevant. This creates something of a challenge for producers who are looking to source affordable, effective packaging that meets all their requirements.

Fortunately, companies such as SAPPI, EcoPack, and Nature Pack are invested in producing sustainable packaging options (just Google "sustainable packaging South Africa" and you will find a comprehensive and cheering list of biodegradable, eco-friendly and zero waste packaging and shopping alternatives). In fact, SAPPI has global commitments to the research and development of this type of packaging and production processes. And, of course, with increased demand comes increased competition, increased investment, increased supply, and a decrease in prices. Which begs the question ...

“ Why is so much unrecyclable and unsustainable packaging still in use? ”





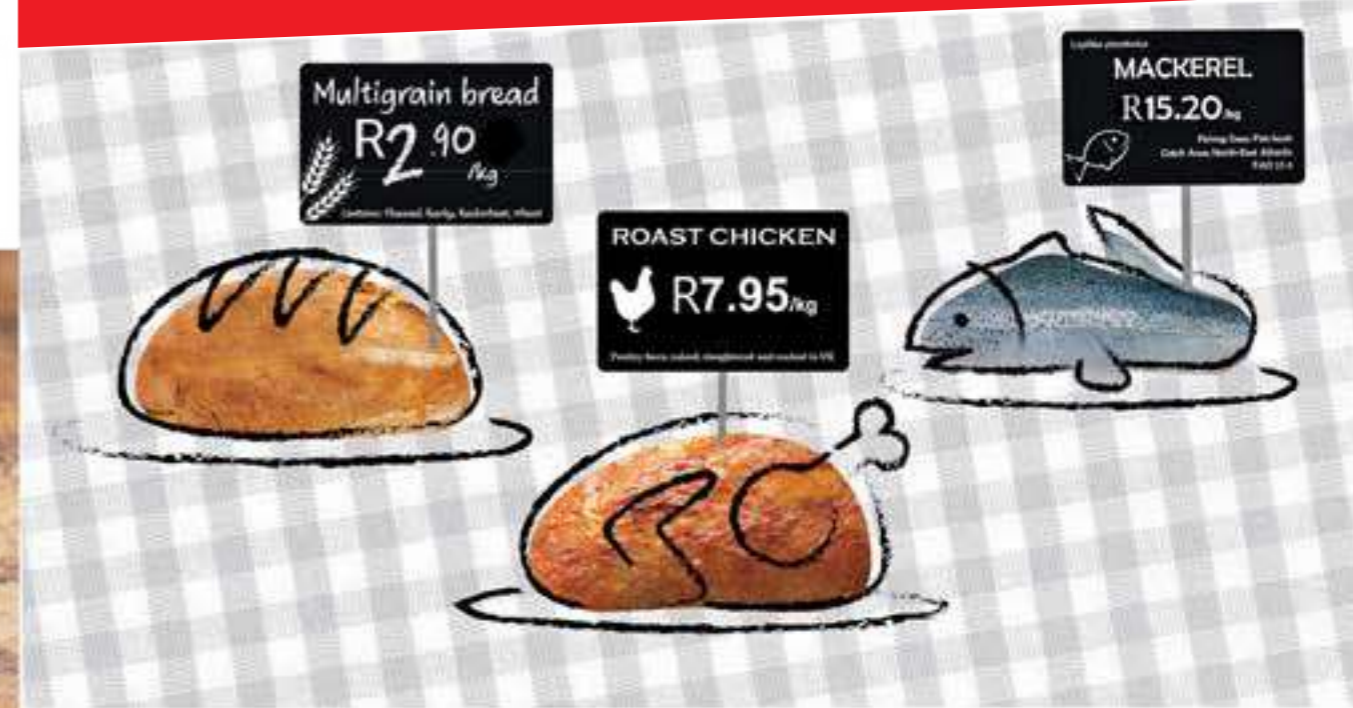
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FRONT OF THE CARD FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS



Product name
 Price
 Image or logo
 Allergens

BACK OF THE CARD FOR YOUR STAFF



Barcode
 PLU reference
 Other information
 Sales tip



e Time Saving and Flexible

e Hygienic and Durable

e A Stronger Brand Image

e Easy to Read

e Food Compliant



Globally there is a trend towards legislation that reduces and even bans single use plastics, and which supports and further develops the use of sustainable and eco-friendly packaging. Kenya is reportedly the country with the strictest single-use plastic ban in the world, with Rwanda a close second. Several African countries have taken steps to reduce and ban plastic waste, yet legislation does not always support these bans, and policing them can be difficult. South Africa only has a ban on thin plastics, the cost of a plastic shopping bag is a paltry 25c, and in practice our plastic problem seems to be as big as ever. It is up to producers, retailers, and consumers to make a committed and concerted effort to change this unpleasant reality by investing in sustainable packaging, shopping bags, and zero waste shopping policies.

Viable alternatives

Glass (as long as it is recyclable), aluminium, and sustainably sourced and produced paper or board are the top choices for environmentally conscious packaging.



Here is where labelling can be crucial, as consumers rely on visuals such as the recycle symbol, the Forest Stewardship

Council (FSC) label for sustainable packaging from responsible forestry, and other such logos to make informed decisions regarding their packaging choices.

Plastic made from recycled material is a more sustainable option, but consumers are beginning to learn that plastic is not infinitely recyclable and the dangers of microplastics are real and increasing. This means that taking easy steps in the short term may end up being costlier than committing to more dramatic change from the start.

Plastic shopping bags are being phased out in upper LSM stores but are worryingly common for lower LSM consumers who rely on cheap packaging to transport goods, sometimes long distances, but are then left without the resources to participate in recycling initiatives. This disparity is something that needs to be addressed by retailers, producers, and government alike.

Biodegradable viscose can be used for tamper proof seals, caps, and lids, as well as shrink wrap packaging.



Tamper evident packaging

Source: www.foodanddrinktechnology.com

SUSTAINABLE TAGS



Source: www.news.com.au

Sustainable bread tags offer a viable alternative to plastic versions.

Bread products manufacturer Tip Top Bakeries, a subsidiary of multinational food group Associated British Foods, recently launched recyclable bread tags that are estimated to eventually remove 400 million plastic tags from the Australian market.

The rollout started in South Australia in November 2020 and the company says the change will remove 11 million plastic tags from South Australia by the end of 2021.

The cardboard bread tags are made from industrial and consumer waste and according to Tip Top, are as durable as plastic tags. No extra cost will be passed onto retailers. Tip Top intends to move to more sustainable packaging for all its products.

Trends, fads and favourites

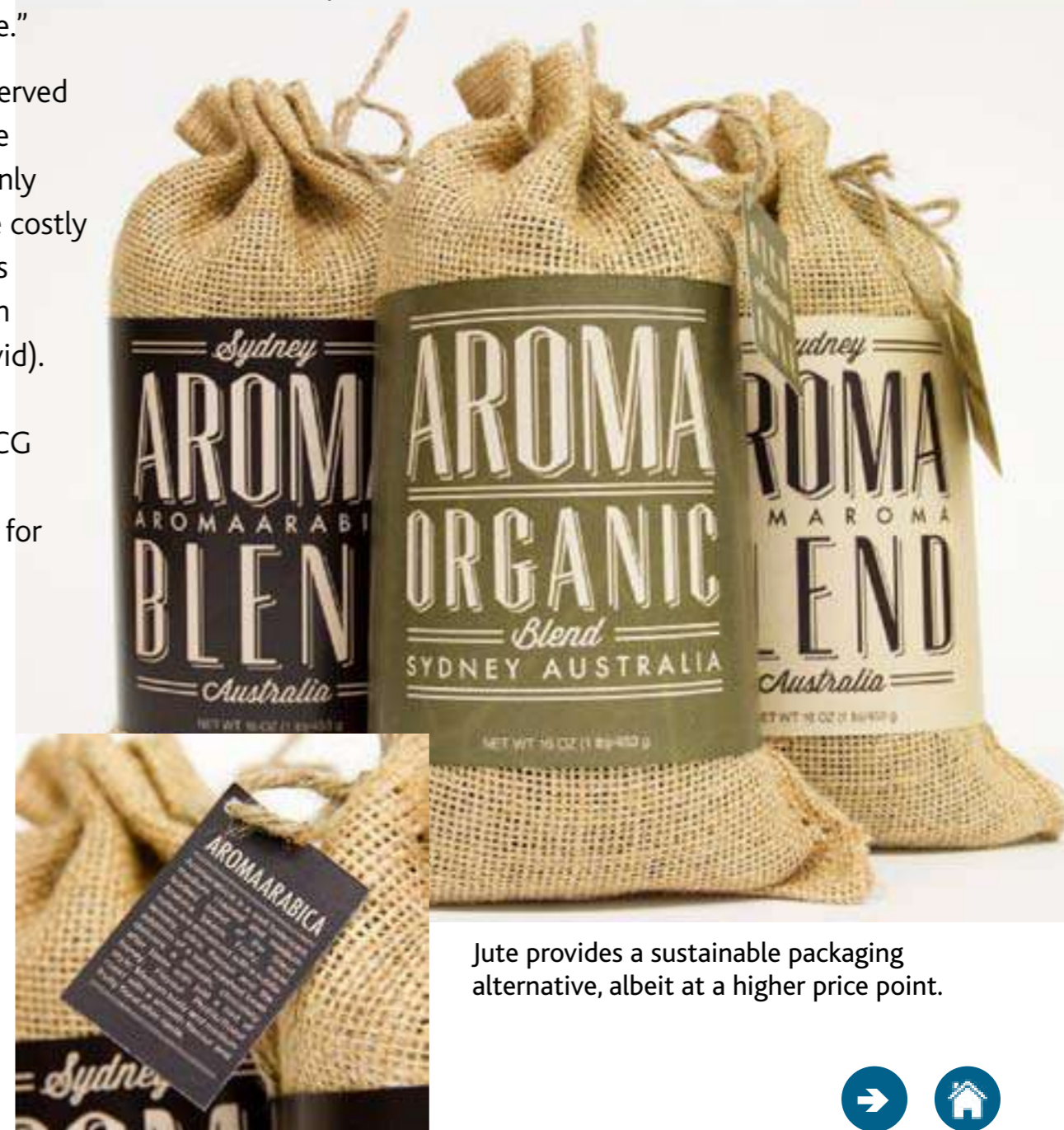
- **Corn Starch Packaging.** According to Enviromall, corn starch packaging products are on the rise. “A new material called Poly-Lactic Acid (PLA) enables biodegradable materials to be fashioned into materials that have the transparency and other properties of clear plastics. There are still some drawbacks, for example, a low heat tolerance, but this material is still suitable for all of the uses you would normally put plastic to.” Made from corn starch and other basic sugars, the cost of producing this type of plastic was previously prohibitive. However, that has recently changed, as the cost of producing PLA has now fallen below that of regular plastics. “PLA packaging biodegrades at between 30 and 90 days once exposed to composting conditions, making it 100% environmentally friendly. The major disadvantage, as mentioned above, is that it is unable to tolerate temperatures in excess of 40°C, and it is also unsuitable for very cold temperatures found in industrial freezers. This is less of a limitation than it would appear, as clear plastics have not traditionally been used in these conditions either.”

- **Tamper proof packaging** is already in use for things like medication and easily contaminated foodstuffs. It has seen an increase in demand globally, with the advent of Covid-19. Nervous consumers want to be assured of the safety of their foodstuffs, and producers want to avoid possible contamination. According to a 2020 article in F&D Technology magazine entitled *Viscose Closures*

reports unprecedented demand for tamper evidence packaging solutions, “Whilst tamper evidence has been mandatory in several sectors, current trends suggest this is becoming more consumer led. Previously, regulators have taken the lead when it comes to driving product safety, however, this is changing. The current situation has given engaged consumers a heightened desire to guarantee product security through the protection that tamper evidence seals provide.”

- **Jute packaging,** usually reserved for shopping bags, is a durable and sustainable option. The only problem here is that it can be costly to produce and for consumers to purchase, and hard to clean (a problem in the time of Covid). Whilst jute may or may not become ‘mainstream’ for FMCG products, its use for reusable shopping bags and packaging for fresh produce is here to stay.

- **Zero waste shopping** is a growing trend, but it may fall prey to the pandemic as the need for food hygiene and safety wars with excessive packaging and plastic waste. In a perfect world, however, shopping using your own reusable or recyclable packaging helps reduce food waste as you buy only what you need, reduces excess packaging, and reduces the carbon footprints of producers, retailers and consumers.



Jute provides a sustainable packaging alternative, albeit at a higher price point.

Source: <https://cargocollective.com>



Up to 40% energy saving with our Close the Case Glass Doors

Ways to save

With energy costs rising and food retailers looking to improve the shopping environment for customers, Insulated Structures has developed an effective solution to reduce the cost of in-store refrigeration while enhancing the customer experience.

Insulated Structures doors are easy to retrofit on in-store cabinets to reduce the energy required to keep chilled foods at the correct temperature.

Meanwhile, customers are able to clearly see and access the products on offer. Reduced energy requirements means smaller refrigeration plant selection for new stores. These savings will offset the cost of the doors. Up to 40% reduction in refrigeration requirement has been achieved.

Benefits

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- Extended product shelf life
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- Optimal product temperature
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Private labels versus manufacturer brands – is there a difference?

Private label packaging can be identical to that of manufacturer brands, or it can be far simpler. By choosing uncomplicated designs, and environmentally friendly production practices and materials, private labels can reduce costs and entice environmentally aware consumers. Ultimately the difference is up to the retailers offering private label products, as they consider whether the cost of choosing sustainable packaging is outweighed by consumer demand, their own CSI initiatives, and their commitment to environmentally friendly practices.



All-important product labelling

The information contained within a product label is, to some extent, mandated by government regulations. The principles of good labelling require an easy to identify product name, brand, product image, and weight. Country of origin and price are also good to have and can sway the buying decision. So, what does this mean for manufacturers and retailers?

Labels – part and parcel of the purchase decision

Labels are the most direct way of conveying product information to consumers. They also convey brand recognition, brand loyalty, and brand trust. When a consumer looks at a product label, they (consciously or subconsciously) ask and

Nutrition labelling



Voluntary

Countries that provide state-sponsored guidelines to be followed voluntarily. Nutrition labelling is not mandatory, unless a health or nutrition claim is made, or unless the food is for special dietary uses

- Gulf Cooperation Council countries • Japan
- Kenya • Mauritius • Nigeria • Philippines • Singapore
- South Africa • Thailand • Turkey • Venezuela

Mandatory

Countries where nutrition labelling is mandatory, even in the absence of a nutrition or health claim

- Argentina • Australia • Brazil • Canada • Chile • China
- Columbia • Ecuador • European Union member states
- Hong Kong • India • Indonesia • Israel • Malaysia
- Mexico • New Zealand • Paraguay • South Korea
- Taiwan • United States • Uruguay

answer several questions. Is this a product I need or want, can I trust this brand, is the label easy to understand, and is the information on it reliable? When a consumer looks at a label, they decide whether to buy that product or not – making labels almost as important as the product itself.

Labels can differ wildly in terms of colour, design, and content, yet they also share certain basic principles ...

- **Product and brand name.** This tells the consumer what they are buying, and from who.
- **Product image.** This should tell the consumer exactly what it is they are purchasing., Guidelines are in place to limit misleading visuals, to ensure a reliable image whilst also being attractive to potential consumers.
- **Product information.** Where it is made or grown, is it local? Does it come from a company or country with values that I support? What can it be used for? What ingredients and allergens does it contain? Certain ingredients, such as sugar, may be labelled in several different ways, which confuses consumers and may ultimately lead to loss of brand trust.
- **Nutritional information.** This is typically given in table or graphic form per 100g and per single serving and includes kilojoules (energy), as well as composition in terms of fats, carbohydrates, sugars, fibre, protein and so on. These can be hard to read and understand but are important tools for consumers looking to make healthier food choices.
- **Packaging materials.** What materials are used? Are they recycled? Are they recyclable? As consumers become more environmentally conscious, and legislation becomes tougher on single-use plastics and other non-recyclable materials, this labelling is becoming increasingly important. Products that consistently use unsustainable packaging may well lose customers. However, certain recycling symbols can be very confusing, leading consumers to sort recycling



incorrectly or give up on it entirely. Again, clear communication with consumers that allows them to make informed decisions is crucial.

- **Other information** that may be included in various forms of labelling include the always-appealing 'New', 'Improved', 'Limited', or 'Sale' messaging.

Labelling legislation in SA

South African legislation pertaining to labelling falls under three departments, but should be considered as an organic whole, which can lead to some confusion and misunderstanding. As there is no single regulatory authority overseeing labelling

of foodstuffs, knowing where to turn for questions on compliance can also be problematic. The most up-to-date regulations, R146 (Labelling and Advertising of Foodstuffs), were passed in March 2010 and are currently being reviewed.

According to the Food Advisory Consumer Service (FACS), "The most relevant laws with respect to the marketing and advertising of foods to consumers is the Consumer Protection Act, The Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act (Foodstuffs Act), the Agricultural Products Standards Act, and the National Health Act, as well as the Regulations that fall under each Act." In short, consumers have "the right to information provided in plain and easily understood language, the right to safe and good quality goods, and the right to fair and responsible marketing."

Mandatory information includes date marking, and nutritional information (where claims such as 'high fibre' or 'low sodium' are made on the packaging), although certain foods are exempt. In addition, certain statements and claims are either prohibited or must adhere to the guidelines in regulation R146 (Labelling and Advertising of Foodstuffs). Allergens must also be declared in keeping with regulation R146.

Change is afoot

Whilst South Africa currently follows a voluntary nutritional labelling policy for certain foodstuffs, there is a move towards clearer and more reliable labelling, increased standards, and clarification of some terms and regulations. In September 2020,



control policy (ACP), and rules on quantitative ingredient declarations (QUID). There are also much stricter regulations with regards to nutritional and health claims that may be made on labels, as well as guidelines that must be followed in order to legally carry these claims.

Whilst there is no provisional date set for these proposals to be implemented, it would be worth keeping an eye on the department of Health's website (health.gov.za). Labelling related queries may be sent to Ms Antoinette Booyzen, Antoinette.Booyzen@health.gov.za, and Ms Anna Godzwana, Anna.Godzwana@health.gov.za.

comparing standards quite a daunting task. There is, however, a definite trend towards more informative labelling.



To combat obesity, poor nutrition, and other food-based health problems, there is a global move towards mandatory nutrition labelling, regardless of what claims have been made. This includes easy-to-understand graphics and tables that are placed front-of-pack to help consumers make healthier and more informed choices.

Globally the food labelling trend is towards clear and easy-to-understand nutritional information and reliable labelling (no false or questionable claims), allowing consumers to make informed and (hopefully) healthy decisions.

In-store, electronic shelf labels (ESLs) use a variety of technologies (from Bluetooth to cloud-based systems), making them accessible to most retailers. As they can be linked to purchasing and reporting systems, changes in price can be easily managed and monitored, with the added benefit of restricted access, allowing only certain employees to make changes.

the Department of Health held a CGCSA (FSI) Food Labelling and Advertising Workshop focussing on changes and amendments to food labelling and advertising regulations (R146).

These include changes to what may and may not be included on a label (misleading terms and markings/pictures), nutritional tables, accredited lab testing to support nutritional labels, and the inclusion of additives, preservatives, sweeteners, antioxidants, and colourants on labels.

The proposals also cover the classification of carbohydrates, allergen risk analysis and allergen



International labelling trends

Labelling legislation is specific to every country and although there is a global standard of sorts, it is voluntary and may be adapted to suit various legislative needs, which makes

The technology of scales

From back of house food preparation to in-store butcheries, delis, bakeries and fresh produce aisles, the scale is king. Far from just weighing produce, today's scales weigh, wrap, provide labels and barcodes, and even link to a store's automation system.

But with advanced technology comes a price tag, meaning stores and retail chains must weigh the cost of high-end technology with the benefit to be had from reduced shrinkage and wastage, and increased accuracy and efficiency.

Ahead of the pack

Technology develops at a rapid pace and that of the retail space is no different. With automated systems that link everything from supply and back-of-house food preparation, to self-service and point of sale systems, electronic shelf labels (ESL) and fully digitised and automated weighing, labelling, and barcoding systems, keeping track of stock and sales easily and accurately has never been easier. The benefits of these advanced systems are clear: A reduction in human error, reduced wastage, accurate reporting, easily updated prices, and fast, automated weighing, labelling, and packing that streamlines processes and saves on time.

Scales at checkouts are commonplace in many stores and serve a dual purpose – they reduce potential waiting time for customers and, with the inclusion of camera technology, can also monitor potential shrinkage in the case of accidentally or



intentionally mislabelled produce. The downside is that customers don't always know what they will be paying at the till, and this should be considered in terms of consumer needs, the number of products this affects, and the store's willingness to have self-service scales in certain produce areas. For some retailers, having scales linked to their point of sale (POS) systems allows them to accurately verify the weight of certain products, thus eliminating potential pricing mistakes and reducing shrinkage.

Self-service technology

Many countries have embraced self-service scales with technological advancements in self-service technology (SST), self-service counters (SSC) and scanners.

Apart from job loss (critical to countries with high unemployment and low skills), the greatest challenges with this type of technology are upkeep and maintenance, and consumer know-how. Who hasn't spent fruitless minutes searching a store for a working price scanner, only to end up asking the cashier at the till? And unless you are familiar with the technology, SSCs can be confusing, frustrating,

and anything but easy-to-use. This could be negated by large touchscreens with clear graphics – but it's a cost outlay that could deter retailers. Shrinkage, whether accidental or from theft, is also a consideration that should be taken seriously, particularly in these worsening economic times.

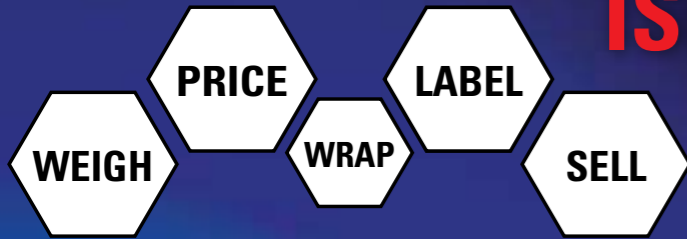
An integrated approach: Some observations

New technology has replaced laser and inkjet printing, resulting in better quality barcodes. Thanks to technological advancements, designing, creating, and printing your own barcodes is cheaper and easier than ever.

According to a leading South Africa packaging, labels and scales company, suppliers and servicers of automated weighing, labelling, wrapping, printing, and related consumables, "There are many

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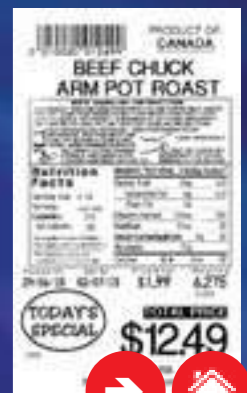
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different factors that go into choosing the right retail label printing solution for your business. Print quality, printing frequency and barcoding requirements, as well as total cost of ownership and ease of use, all come into play.

Many retail stores and factory facilities have inefficient and overly expensive labelling processes because their needs have changed over time, but their label printers have not. Laser and inkjet document printers are simply unable to keep up with the demands of modern labelling scenarios. It is because of this that it makes sense to invest in a purpose-built retail label printer to provide a more cost-effective and smarter solution for your labelling needs.

These label printers also provide the added benefits of greater convenience and more consistent print quality, as well as superior performance when it comes to barcode printing.”

An integrated retail barcoding system is also a worthwhile investment. These can eliminate potential human error risks, simplify staff training, and provide quick and easy access to data.

Automatic wrappers take less time, use less plastic, take up less space and use less heat (and therefore electricity) than manual wrapping stations, and can weigh, wrap, and label products at once. This means product reaches shelves faster, increasing efficiency and productivity.

Variable length labels allow the same machine (such as a scale) to produce different size labels without having to change paper rolls or print set ups, saving on time and labour and creating a more

efficient labelling process. This is helpful as government regulations require a certain amount of information be provided on labels, but these requirements differ from product to product.



While packaging, labelling, and weighing are all separate processes, it is clear they should also be considered as an integrated whole. As consumer awareness increases and the move away from single-use plastics and unsustainable processes gains momentum, keeping up to date with technological advancements can be costly, but the return on investment makes it well worth considering. **SR**



Ann-Baker Keulemans is a highly experienced business-to-business and business-to-consumer journalist and writer. She has been published in numerous print and online platforms, writing on topics related to business, lifestyle, and health, with extensive knowledge on the SA retail and wholesale landscape. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature (British and Commonwealth) and Media Studies and is a member of the Golden Key Honour Society. Contact Wilkins Ross Communications at annbk@wilkinsross.co.za.



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