



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Press Release(25)02
(English only)**

9 January 2025

Various sugar related articles

The Executive Director would like to draw your attention to the articles below all of which are relevant to the sugar sector.

Sugaronline Ebriefing

INDONESIA: Researchers says sugar tax has limited impact in reducing non-communicable diseases

Researchers at Indonesia's IPB University Taxes found that taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages have limited real-world impact in combating non-communicable diseases (NCDs), according to the Food Navigator.

The study found that the sugar tax could effectively reduce the prevalence of NCDs. However, when the researchers examined empirical evidence from countries that had implemented sugar taxes, the results found a significant gap between the predicted and observed outcomes of the taxation policies.

EUROPE: Sugar producers plan to cut production amid fall in consumption and rising costs

Sugar producers in Europe are re-evaluating their production strategies in a scenario of a fall in consumption in the region, rising logistics costs and a reduction in beet prices that could discourage growers in the future, according to S&P Global.

A market participant said European producers are announcing that for the next 2025/26 crop, they will plant 12%-13% less and maybe bring forward the carryover volume from this crop to the next.

UK: Researchers working on project to tackle bacterial disease in sugarbeets

A project funded by the state-run UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) aims to deliver a roadmap for sugarbeet growers and other stakeholders on the best ways to mitigate the bacterial disease Syndrome Basse Richesses (SBR), according to Farmers Weekly.

The SBR is currently not present in the UK but has affected other areas in Europe, resulting in up to 5% sugar loss and reductions in root yields by up to 30% on infected plants.

The bacteria is spread by the insect Pentastiridius leporinus, known as the reed plant hopper.

SRI LANKA: Minister inspects sugar factories

Sri Lanka's minister of Industries and Entrepreneurship Development, Sunil Handunnetti, inspected two factories owned by the Lanka Sugar Company recently, according to Daily News. During the visit, he said the company should explore introducing a low-cost, high-quality alcohol to the domestic market and the production of organic fertiliser and organic sugar for exports.

He also held discussions with Lanka Sugar Company employees and other stakeholders to establish a network for the distribution of sugar production, prepare performance indicators to increase the productivity of employees, among other issues.

FoodNavigator.com

Top 5 women's health trends impacting food and beverage



Women's health is fast becoming one of the biggest food and beverage trends of the decade. We look at the top five categories gaining attention, sparking NPD and boosting sales.

<https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2025/01/03/top-5-womens-health-trends-impacting-food-and-beverage/>

GLP-1 compatible food labels launched by giant as 'industry first'Opens in new window



Highlighting that a product is compatible with the diets of consumers using GLP-1 drugs, like Ozempic, will become a bigger need, according to this food giant.

<https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2025/01/02/conagra-launches-food-labelling-for-glp-1-drugs-like-ozempic/>

ED & Man Daily

China's sugar production reached 4.4034M MT, an increase of 37.82% - YNTW.com -

According to the China Sugar Association, as of the end of December 2024, three beet sugar mills have stopped production in the 2024/25 sugar production period (hereinafter referred to as "this sugar production period"), and sugar mills in other provinces (regions) have started to crush sugar except Yunnan and Hainan. As of the end of December 2024, the country produced a total of 4.4034M MT of sugar in this sugar production period, an increase of 1.2083M MT year-on-year, an increase of 37.82%; the country sold a total of 2.4994M MT of sugar, an increase of 801.2K MT year-on-year, an increase of 47.18%; the cumulative sugar sales rate was 56.76%, an increase of 3.61 %age points year-on-year.

Chinese scientists unlock key advances in sugarcane genomics - Bloomberg - A Chinese research team from Guangxi University has successfully decoded the genome of the modern cultivated sugarcane variety Xintaitang No. 22, shedding light on the highly complex allopolyploid genome of sugarcane and its evolutionary mechanisms. Sugarcane plays a vital role in the production of sugar, alcohol, and bioenergy, offering substantial economic and agricultural value. XTT22 was once the leading sugarcane variety in terms of planting area in China for 15 consecutive years. More than 90 percent of the country's fourth and fifth-generation sugarcane varieties were developed using it as a parent.

SASA

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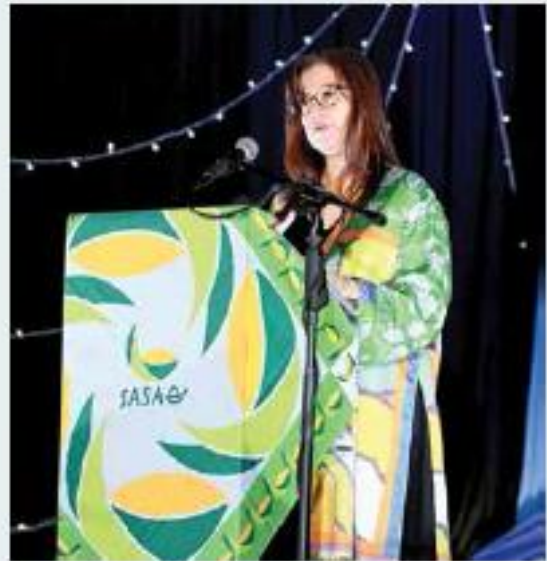
Sifiso Mhlaba

Through phase one of the master plan, the Industry has identified product diversification opportunities such as sustainable aviation fuel, polylactic acid, bioethanol (for fuel blending), bio-polyethylene and cogeneration to ensure the sustainability of the industry. The apex priorities/objectives of phase one of the master plan, a brainchild of President Cyril Ramaphosa, included the optimisation of the local market and coming up with clearly diversified solutions. The master plan was put in place after the industry faced an existential crisis precipitated by serious challenges such as incursion of sugar imports, insufficient tariff and devastating sugar tax (Health Promotion Levy – HPL). The levy, in particular, has had severe ramifications for the industry – a multi-billion-rand revenue loss, thousands of job losses and permanent closure of two mills.

Mhlaba is extremely concerned about the persistence of the serious challenge pertaining to policy incoherence when it comes to the critical issue of the master plan and the sugar tax. It is one of the priority issues he intends to address as the new SASA CEO. "Put simply, the sugar tax is working against the core objectives of the master plan. It is the main stumbling block to the realisation of goals and objectives contained in the master plan. Any increases to the sugar tax or lowering of the threshold would not only undo the master plan achievements, but it would also decimate the industry. Therefore, we intend to work closely with the government to ensure policy coherence and support for the industry. For us, this is an exigent matter. One of the main ways to ensure certainty is by extending the current sugar tax moratorium to 2030 in order to align with the Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030. The successful implementation of the 'Reimagined Cane Industry Strategy' depends on this," emphasises Mhlaba.

As phase one ended on 31 March 2023, the industry and all stakeholders are currently discussing the phase two modalities. Mhlaba asserts that the key pillars of the master plan should be:

- Local market offtake commitments with sustainable and predictable pricing framework;
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- Small-scale grower support and retention;
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Mhlaba's historic appointment has been roundly welcomed by both internal and external stakeholders. SASA Independent Chairperson Advocate Fay Mukaddam says Mhlaba is the CEO which SASA needs right now to take the industry to the next level as SASA leads the "Reimagined Cane Industry Strategy" efforts, with more emphasis on innovation, product diversification and transformation. "Mhlaba takes over from an industry stalwart who has done so much. Sifiso has now taken the baton to build on Trix's outstanding legacy and take SASA (and the industry) to even greater heights. "I call on all stakeholders including our government, industry role-players, downstream users and all value chain partners to support our new CEO," adds Adv Mukaddam.

His appointment was lauded by various industry leaders including the Chairpersons of the three industry Associations (i.e. SAFDA, SACGA and SASMA), who all look forward to working with him in taking the industry to the next level. There is a lot of work to be done - creative thinking and re-imagining to take this industry forward and we look forward to observing Mhlaba's journey.

Cedric Mboya is Group Communications & Media Manager at SASA

GLOWING TRIBUTES FOR RETIRED SUGAR INDUSTRY LEGEND

Cedric Mboya

Recently retired South African Sugar Association (SASA) Executive Director (Chief Executive Officer – CEO) Trix Trikam has been hailed for his immense contribution to the sugar industry.

"A living legend, a sweet walking encyclopaedia, whose name has become synonymous with SASA and the country's sugar industry. Just like there is no way you could talk about the 1994 elections without mentioning Mandela, you could never possibly talk about SASA without Trix's name coming up," said Advocate Fay Mukaddam, Independent Chairperson of SASA. She was speaking at the farewell function held in honour of Trikam on 5 December 2024 at KwaShukela (SASA's Headquarters) in Mount Edgecombe, Durban.

The who's who of the sugar industry were in attendance. In addition, there were attendees from the region (other African countries) as well as a video tribute message from International Sugar Organisation's (ISO's) Executive Director José Orive. Forestry, Fisheries and Environment

Deputy Minister Narend Singh and former health minister (currently, Chairperson of Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) Dr Zwell Mkhize also graced the event.

In his tribute, SASA Vice-Chairperson Hans Hackmann said he had never come across anyone who was more knowledgeable and understood the industry better than Trikam did. He added that Trikam had made SASA the world-class organisation it is today. Through his video tribute message, Orive said he and Trikam had become friends who could share jokes. "Trix, you have had a tremendous career at SASA, one of the top associations in the world today. Your legacy will endure," said Orive. He then awarded Trikam the prestigious ISO Pinlo Nastari Sugar Excellence Award, recognising Trikam's outstanding contribution to

Below: Former SASA Executive Director Trix Trikam makes a grand entrance with his wife Nayna and daughter Poonam.





Above top: from left – SASA Independent Chairperson Advocate Fay Mukaddam, SASA Vice-Chairperson Hans Hackmann and SASA Vice-Chairperson Rex Talmage. Above middle: from left – Forestry, Fisheries and Environment Deputy Minister Narend Singh, former Health Minister and Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Chairperson Dr Zwell Mkhize and Eswatini Sugar Association Executive Director Banele Nyamane. Bottom: from left – South African Sugar Millers' Association Chairman Rolf Lütge, South African Farmers Development Association Chief Operating Officer Thandokwakhe Sibiyi and SA Canegrowers Chairman Higgins Mdluli.

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Eswatini Sugar Association Executive Director Banele Nyamane, representing SACU and SADC Sugar Producers, panegyrised Trikam for what he termed "an extraordinary journey" in the sugar industry. He added that Trikam was an authority and highly regarded figure in the whole region. Singh commended Trikam for his invaluable contribution to the economy of KwaZulu-Natal and the country as a whole. Mkhize, an alumnus of the Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education, said he had always admired Trikam's style of leadership. He added that Trikam had played a major role in the industry's transformation.

Industry members, the South African Farmers Association (SAFDA), SA Canegrowers and the South African Sugar Millers' Association (SASMA) also extolled Trikam. SA Canegrowers Chairperson Higgins Mdluli credited Trikam with the move to RV (Recoverable Value) cane payment system. He also hailed

him for the recent gazette which recognised SAFDA as the permanent member of the industry. SAFDA Chief Operating Officer, on behalf of SAFDA Executive Chairman Dr Siyabonga Madlala, also commended Trikam for the role he played in the process leading up to the official recognition of SAFDA. "You will always be our hero," said Sibiyi. SASMA Chairman Rolf Lütge said Trikam's contribution to the industry was massive, and that it (contribution) was "always for the good of the industry."

Said SASA Vice-Chairman Rex Talmage: "Trikam has served with absolute distinction. Trix's efforts in promoting inclusivity and economic empowerment have been transformative. It is a legacy which will continue to inspire us for generations to come. Your efforts have secured the future of this crucial industry." Mhlabi said Trikam had been a pillar of strength for SASA for many years, signifying his immense role and influence in the organisation. "We are going to build on the legacy you taught us, Trix. You have passed the baton to us and we dare not fall," said Mhlabi.



Left, from top: From left – Former SASA Chairperson Don Macleod in conversation with Scott Lavery from Standard Bank. SASMA Director Larry Riddle having a chat with Peter Nourse, a former employee of SASA. Trix Trikam with wife Nayna, daughter Poonam and friends. Above centre, from top: From left – Poonam, Nayna and Trix Trikam. SASA'S former Executive Director, Trix Trikam, receives the prestigious ISO Plinio Nastari Sugar Excellence Award from his successor, Sifiso Mhlaba. Right, from top: – Trix Trikam, SASA'S former Executive Director; (Middle right and bottom right) Trix Trikam with wife Nayna, daughter Poonam and family members.

Responding to the tributes, Trikam thanked SASA and industry members for their contributions during his career. "I have often compared the SASA executive team members to the Nepal sherpas who enable the achievements of mountaineers who climb Mount Everest. They may not appear on a list of Councillors, but they climb mountains over and over again. They get the importance of servant leadership – and they have all my gratitude and admiration". He added: "The role of servant leader is also well understood by the CEOs and staff of the three Associations: SA Cane growers, SAFDA and SASMAL. Our ability to work well together, despite the differing mandates of our Associations, is essential to the sustained success of industry partnership decision-making. I would like to acknowledge those of you, both past and present here tonight, for the constructive tone of the engagements that we have maintained over the years."

He said it was an opportune time for SASA to have a change of guard as the organisation led efforts aimed at ushering in the era of "Reimagined Cane Industry Strategy", which is mainly premised on product diversification to ensure the sustainability

of the sector. "The industry stands at the start of a new era that will require agreement on the principles that will apply to a 'Reimagined Sugarcane Industry'. Sifiso, you bring the very expertise that the SASA Executive Director will be required to apply during the critical period ahead. I have no doubt that you will make an excellent contribution to the quality of industry decision-making and to the success of the processes whereby changes are agreed and implemented."

Turning to his family (wife Nayna and daughter Poonam), Trikam said their support had been critical in enabling him to do his work. "Nayna has played many roles, not least that of encouraging my faith and the ongoing spiritual journey that I have pursued in parallel and drawn on during my career. Poonam, there have been so many nights when the challenges of my work could have made it impossible for me to sleep. At those times, I have just had to think of the blessing that you and your mom are in my life to feel the peace that comes from knowing that nothing is more important to me than the two of you."

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INTERNATIONAL SUGAR CONFERENCE PROVIDES LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

The South African sugar industry delegation – led by the South African Sugar Association (SASA) – attended the International Sugar Organisation (ISO) Seminar, under the theme “Sustainable Solutions for Sugar and Energy”, in London last month.

The conference proved crucial for South Africa as the country’s sugar industry is currently investigating product diversification opportunities (including sustainable aviation fuel, biofuels, bioethanol and polylactic acid) as part of the all-important South African Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030.

The ISO describes itself as “the unique Intergovernmental body devoted to improving conditions on the world’s sugar market through Debate, Analysis, Special Studies, Transparent Statistics, Seminars, Conferences and Workshops. The ISO holds annual Seminars with the objective of increasing knowledge and understanding of the sugar market and related problems”. The conference proved crucial for South Africa as the country’s sugar industry is currently investigating product diversification opportunities (including sustainable aviation fuel, biofuels, bioethanol and polylactic acid) as part of the all-important South African Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030. The platform provided interaction opportunities with the world’s leading sugar-producing countries such as Brazil and India which have successfully conceptualised and implemented product diversification.

Right top: From left – South African Sugar Association (SASA) CEO Sifiso Mhlaba, SASA External Affairs Director Portia Mpofu, South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Mamabolo, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition Agro-processing Chief Director Ncumisa Maata-Mhlau and International Sugar Organization (ISO) Executive Director José Orive at the ISO Sugar Conference in London, UK.

Right bottom: South African sugar industry delegation hosted by South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Mamabolo and International Sugar Organization (ISO) Executive Director José Orive at the ISO Sugar Conference in London, UK.





YOUNGEST AND FIRST AFRICAN CEO FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR ASSOCIATION!

Cedric Mboyisa

He was born into a modest family of small-scale sugarcane farmers in Driekoppies village, Mpumalanga. Although sugarcane farming has been a lifetime passion for him, never in his wildest dreams did he ever imagine he would be at the helm of the organisation responsible for the multi-billion sugar industry in South Africa.



Above: Sifiso Mhlaba has been appointed Executive Director (Chief Executive Officer – CEO) of the South African Sugar Association (SASA).

Meet 36-year-old Sifiso Mhlaba who has been appointed Executive Director (Chief Executive Officer – CEO) of the South African Sugar Association (SASA), making him the youngest ever to occupy the position and the first African to hold the position. "I feel honoured that SASA and industry members have shown this level of confidence in me. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would occupy this position at the age of 36. How I wish my (late) father, who was a small-scale grower himself, was still alive to witness this moment! I am grateful my mother, who is also a sugarcane farmer, is around to witness this and actually was with me on my first day," says Mhlaba, who assumed his CEO duties on 1 November 2024.

Before ascending to the CEO position, Mhlaba excelled as SASA's National Market Executive and was later promoted to National Market and Trade Policy Director. Prior to joining SASA in 2015, he was a regulatory and competition economist at DNA Economics, a consulting firm based in Pretoria, where he also consulted on agriculture, climate change and energy projects. He is also a small-scale sugarcane farmer in Mpumalanga.

In terms of academic qualifications, Mhlaba holds four degrees – BSc in Agricultural Economics (cum laude, North West University), BSc Honours in Agricultural Economics (cum laude, North West University), Master of Science in Applied Economics (Washington State University) and an MBA from Stellenbosch University. Mhlaba also holds the Certified Director® designation from the Institute of Directors in South Africa (IoDSA).

Mhlaba took over from the recently retired Trix Trikam (65), who was with SASA for 43 years, 26 of which as SASA CEO. "I am truly honoured to be stepping into the role and look forward to building on the tremendous legacy left by Trix. Having being part of the SASA Executive team for the last nine years, I have observed Trix's steady hand and calmness as he steered SASA and the industry through several challenges."

Mhlaba also acknowledges SASA's success over the years is largely due to the commitment and dedication of SASA's employees. "Each staff member plays a critical role in enabling SASA to deliver an efficient service to our members and society. I look forward to leading this incredible team."

SASA represents the sugarcane growing and milling and refining sectors in South Africa. The industry operates in the deeply rural and job-starved regions of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. Currently, there are 25 000 sugarcane growers – they are represented by South African Farmers Development Association (SAFDA) and SA Canegrowers



Above, from left: Sifiso Mhlaba, the newly appointed Executive Director (Chief Executive Officer – CEO) of the South African Sugar Association (SASA), alongside Trix Trikam, the former CEO of SASA.

Association (SACGA). The milling and refining sector is represented by the South African Sugar Millers' Association (SASMA), which comprises six milling companies, which operate 12 sugar mills (10 in KwaZulu-Natal and two in Mpumalanga).

"In my position, I am serving both growers and millers in an equitable manner," explains Mhlaba. He believes that the Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030 is critically important for the sustainability of the industry. "The importance of the master plan cannot be overstated. Through the master plan processes and other industry initiatives/programmes, we have devised ways to ensure that both growers and millers benefit and contribute to a more inclusive value chain."

Mhlaba is of the firm view that working together with internal and external stakeholders is crucial for the industry. "I plan to build more collaborative relationships with all the key stakeholders throughout the value chain including government. We are on a journey to diversify and produce more products from the cane stalk, this will require engagement with stakeholders that are not traditionally sugar industry stakeholders." In terms of government engagement, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development remain key. Also importantly, Parliament's portfolio and select committees which deal with the industry.

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The ISO describes itself as “the unique intergovernmental body devoted to improving conditions on the world’s sugar market through Debate, Analysis, Special Studies, Transparent Statistics, Seminars, Conferences and Workshops. The ISO holds annual Seminars with the objective of increasing knowledge and understanding of the sugar market and related problems”. The conference proved crucial for South Africa as the country’s sugar industry is currently investigating product diversification opportunities (including sustainable aviation fuel, biofuels, bioethanol and polylactic acid) as part of the all-important South African Sugarcane Value Chain Master Plan to 2030. The platform provided interaction opportunities with the world’s leading sugar-producing countries such as Brazil and India which have successfully conceptualised and implemented product diversification.

Right top: From left – South African Sugar Association (SASA) CEO Sifiso Mhlaba, SASA External Affairs Director Portia Mpofo, South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Mamabolo, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition Agro-processing Chief Director Ncumisa Mcata-Mhlauli and International Sugar Organization (ISO) Executive Director José Orive at the ISO Sugar Conference in London, UK.

Right bottom: South African sugar industry delegation hosted by South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Mamabolo and International Sugar Organization (ISO) Executive Director José Orive at the ISO Sugar Conference in London, UK.

