



# Invest in health – the real wealth

*A wide variety of seasonal vegetables will inspire customers to think creatively – and healthily – for dinner.*

## Make your store a destination for health-conscious customers

BY LAURA DURHAM

South Africans are the third fattest nation on earth. A survey done in 2010 by GlaxoSmithKline has found that 61% of the South African population is overweight or morbidly obese. Statistically that would mean nearly two out of every three customers entering your store is overweight. Besides being a societal call to action, offering a range of health and healthy foods will also add weight to your turnover.

### Government action

Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi has set targets to radically reduce non-communicable diseases (including CVD, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease) – the majority of which are caused by poor choices and behaviours.

The target set for overweight/obesity is to reduce it by 10% by 2020. He has also said that fast food companies would soon be forbidden from marketing their 'unhealthy' products on TV during children's programmes.

As a further crackdown, foods in which artificial trans fats account for more

### It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver

– Mahatma Gandhi

than 2% of the oil content, ranging from spreads to biscuits, are now banned from supermarket shelves. This is as of 17 August when the final regulations relating to trans fats in foodstuffs came into effect. "These regulations prohibit the sale, manufacturing and importation of any oils and fats containing partial hydrogenated fats and oils, also referred to as 'trans fat', in processed foods [with] two grams per 100g thereof," Dr Motsoaledi said in a written reply to a parliamentary question.

According to Shoab Moosa, sales and marketing director at Willowton Group, trans fats help to increase the shelf life of products and give food that creamy feel that keeps people coming back for more.

Many manufacturers have worked hard to lower the amount of trans fats found in foods. "While many commercial vegetable oils contain trans fat, non-hydrogenated versions are available. Manufacturers like Willowton Group are now using alternative technologies for the processing of vegetable oil that do not have harmful effects on health. In turn, this means that

food manufacturers can now use more appropriate types of fats and oils in their products while consumers can replace harmful oils with others that are rich in omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats," he said.

However, the greatest concern amongst consumers is that they will be serving up harmful trans fats without knowing it.

### Healthy eating – what's the fuss?

The benefits of healthy eating go without saying, but sometimes it is important to remind people of the link between healthy foods and their health.

"Research has shown that eating properly can reduce cholesterol, drive down the propensity for heart disease, dramatically assist the fight against diabetes, help in the fight against cancer, assist in the quality of life of HIV patients, to name but a few," says Justine Lever, brand manager at Pouyoukas Foods.

But it is not just about the fight against disease, it has a lot to do with the overall well being of an individual as our case study on Fresh Earth Food Store shows. "Food plays such an important part in balancing the human body – in order for us to function optimally we really need to pay better attention to what we consume on a day-by-day basis," says Lever. ▶

## HEALTH & FUNCTIONAL FOODS ►

### Where are the health products?

There has been a major drive towards healthy living and health foods in the last few years. But this consumer demand is not yet being adequately met by manufacturers or retailers.

"Consumers are being more and more exposed to the benefits of healthy foods, which has resulted in an awakening amongst them, that has in turn driven the demand for healthier eating alternatives," comments Lever.

She says this is particularly noticeable in the home meal replacement (HMR) selection in supermarkets, which has moved from quick deep fried stodgy foods to the delivery of fresh foods and a 'deli' offering. Of course, this depends completely on the customer base of a store because some customers will still prefer a large and filling meal rather than the healthy alternative, which might be perceived as less filling.

Some chains have picked up on this demand for healthy foods. Pick n Pay, for example, has entered into a partnership with Discovery Vitality where members can save up to 25% on HealthyFood (catalogue available from [www.discovery.co.za](http://www.discovery.co.za)) and earn smart shopper points on their overall qualifying spend at any Pick n Pay store.

Despite the health trend becoming firmly entrenched, there are still too few health products available in stores generally. Says Anne Keyworth, owner and director of Fruit Pack: "In my opinion there's a lack of healthy food snacks in South Africa's food market in relation to the abundance of junk food snacks."

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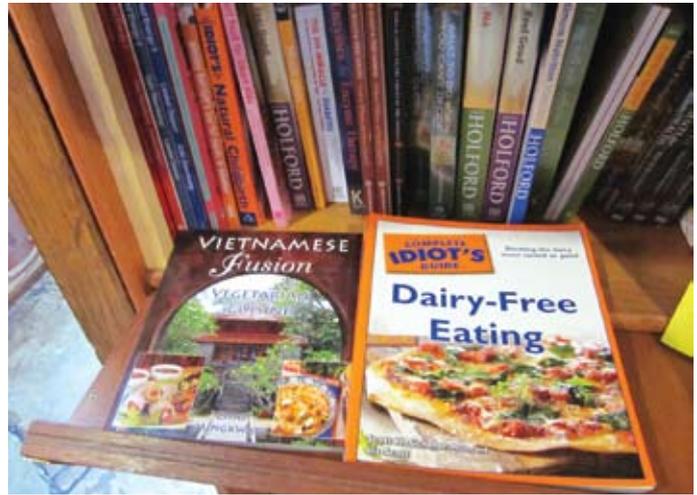
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*Include some health recipe books in your recipe book section to help customers to prepare healthy meals at home after purchasing the ingredients in your store.*

### Strict labelling regulations

Separating fact from fiction is key in the health foods category and no doubt the new labelling regulations will ensure that manufacturers do this from the get go. "Based on our investigations, a number of 'healthy snacks' are in fact misleading consumers as they claim to be 'preservative free' yet they contain nasty ingredients that preserve the product," says Keyworth.

Manufacturers will no longer be able to mislead consumers with such claims as of 1 March next year, when the new regulations as detailed by R146 of 2010 of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act (Act 54 of 1972), come into effect. "The intention of R146 is to close known loopholes that could allow misleading foodstuff labelling and advertising," explained Yolande van der Riet nutritional specialist for the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa's (CGCSA) Food Safety Initiative (FSI) at the CGCSA's annual conference in October. In addition, the regulations will "ensure that consumers have access to honest, accurate foodstuff labels, which will enable them to make informed buying choices," she added.

Section 13 of the regulation details the prohibited statements, "such as the words 'health' or 'healthy' or other words or symbols implying that the foodstuff in and of itself or a substance of the foodstuff has health-giving properties in any manner including the name or trade name, except in the case of the fortification logo for food vehicles as determined by regulations made under the Act and regulation 51 (2)." "If the new labelling regulations are enforced, we predict that a number of our competitors will disappear from retailers' shelves due to incorrect, misleading and/or illegal packaging," comments Keyworth.

Van der Riet advises manufacturers to ensure that every word, illustration, number and logo on the label/advertisement has true value to the consumer. "And be prepared to substantiate any labelling information within 48 hours," she warns.

### DoH approved endorsement

More health products will soon be seen on shelves bearing the Weigh-Less logo following the Department of Health (DoH)'s approval of its endorsement entity status in August. "We are absolutely thrilled! We believe that we are the first weight management company to be approved as an 'endorsement entity' by the South African Department of Health," says Weigh-Less chairperson, Mary Holroyd, who founded the organisation in 1975. ►



## HEALTH FOOD: CASE STUDY

# Our health is in our hands

**"Our health is 100% controlled by us. We have the power to choose a McDonald's body or a whole foods body." This is how Matthew Ballenden, owner of the Fresh Earth Food Store, lives his life and how he runs his retail and dining experience in Emmarentia, Johannesburg.**

Ballenden's experience as general manager of operations for Mugg & Bean coupled with his passion for nutritional cooking and natural and organic retailing, led to Fresh Earth Food Store (rebranded from Fruits & Roots) in 2008. "Our purpose is to take health foods to the mainstream and deradicalise them, but at the same not to lose the integrity of the products and our business," he says.

His aim is to get better prices, better value-for-money within the health food industry, as well as make consumers aware of a fair price. "Why would you want to put something cheap into your body?" he asks.

Being aware of what we eat has certainly become in vogue over the last few years, and it is one of the only categories that has not declined during or since the recession. "Eating properly is important – even when you're poor because then your health becomes even more vital for your survival. It's cheaper in the bigger scheme of things," he says.

Ballenden says that South Africa is actually not far behind the rest of the world in terms of the health food offering and 'mainstreaming' of the category. Fresh Earth currently supplies 30 lines of baked goods – gluten free breads, artisan breads, granola, rusks and nut butters – to major retailers in the country.

Moving into the supermarket retail space has been quite a challenge, according to Ballenden, as managers and staff need to buy into the whole idea of adding health foods. "The biggest barrier to entry is the retailer himself and his lack of knowledge about health foods. And health foods can be profitable, if not more so than some other categories," he argues. He suggests that if retailers are interested in bringing in a health food range they should use a consultant for advice or walk the health road themselves. He says that store owners and managers who themselves follow a healthy lifestyle, are generally more open to including a wider range of health products. "Retailers need to create the market and excitability, promoting the flavours and health benefits to consumers," he says,

Many people still associate health foods with blandness but a dining experience at Fresh Earth is quite the opposite. "Food can be healthy and decadent. You just have to have a gastronomic experience. We don't market ourselves as a vegetarian restaurant – we offer a menu that tastes good, which so happens to be vegetarian," he says.



*Many people still associate health foods with blandness but a dining experience at Fresh Earth Food Store in Emmarentia, Johannesburg is quite the opposite.*



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## HEALTH FOOD ▶

"Weigh-Less is about making healthy food choices and is not a diet," she explains. The Weigh-Less range of products gives all consumers a range of line items that have been specially formulated to help them make that healthy choice. Weigh-Less products are available in approximately 3 000 stores throughout South Africa, including Spar, Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Checkers, OK Bazaars, and Dis-Chem.

## So many people spend their health gaining wealth, and then have to spend their wealth to regain their health

– A.J Reb Materi

The DoH has rules that health claims on the labels of foodstuffs are not necessarily in all cases permissible and thus by using the Weigh-Less, Glycemic Index Foundation of South Africa (GIFSA) and/or Diabetes SA logo, manufacturers are afforded an opportunity for increased visibility on shelves – in so doing, consumers will also become more aware of the logos and support those stores stocking healthy endorsed foodstuffs with which they become acquainted.

### Increased awareness

Retailers are also doing their bit to promote good health in-store. Clicks, for example

offers a comprehensive wellness screening at selected Clicks Pharmacies and Clinics, which tests blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, and BMI.

With its focus on fresh produce, Fruit & Veg City's stores seem to be popular with health-conscious customers. Fresh produces amounts to 30% of sales at Food Lover's Market at The Wedge Food in Sandton, Johannesburg, according to owner, Ben Rubin. Customers are able to try some of the fresh produce on offer at the in-store Smoothie Bar, which offers a variety of fresh smoothies, made on the spot with either yoghurt or ice cream. The Short Cuts department also provides customers with a convenient vegetable and fruit chopping service.

Rubin says he has noticed an increased awareness of healthy eating amongst his wide customer base, with products deemed as healthy, such as olive oil, becoming very popular. In addition, customers are asking for cuts of meat with less fat at the butchery and the fish shop has taken off since the store opened in April.

There is a lot of debate around whether it is better to position all health foods in one dedicated department in-store, or whether the products should be positioned alongside the rest of the category. For example, sugar-free sweets – should they be in the confectionery aisle or with the rest of the health products?

Fresh Earth's Matthew Ballenden says it depends on the product – a gluten free bread should obviously be in the bakery, but on its own dedicated shelf. But raw sugar could be in both the sugar section

and the health section. He says that Tesco used to have a dedicated health section but since it has become more mainstream, the products have been incorporated within other departments.

There is also a move to the High Street of the past where consumers can go to a separate butcher, baker and organic foods shop. Ballenden therefore plans on expanding the Fresh Earth operation to eventually have one store in every great neighbourhood of Johannesburg before going national. At the moment they do have an online store with over 3 000 SKUs that can be ordered and delivered across the country.

### Diabetic friendly store

Customers with diabetes do not have to be limited to a health shop either. A person with diabetes must make certain lifestyle changes to manage his/her blood sugar levels but many of the teachings are applicable to all consumers who should be keeping healthy.

"Diabetics need to adapt a healthy eating lifestyle with balanced nutrition. That means balanced meals with fruit and vegetables, less sugar and salt and an increased intake of whole grains. They also need to limit saturated fats, meat in moderation, low fat chicken and increase fat intake," explains Leigh-Ann Silber, registered dietician from Canderel. "Increasing physical exercise is also part of the equation," she adds.

Silber says that generally, supermarkets do cater for diabetics needs "because a diabetic lifestyle is healthy eating and there is an abundance of fruit, vegetables, low Glycemic Index (GI) and wholegrain foods in supermarkets".

As part of its Diabetes Month activities in November, Woolworths has launched an online virtual store tour led by Woolworths dietician, Maryke van Zyl, to help diabetics and their families learn more about making better food choices.

"We introduced our dietician-led tours to mark World Diabetes Day last year. They proved so popular that we're doing them again this year. Places on the store tours are limited, so we've produced an online version that anyone can access at any time," explains Zyda Rylands, MD of foods at Woolworths. "Health is part of our Good Food Journey and our commitment to offering our customers tasty, healthier choices."



Information booklets and shelf talkers can go a long way in informing customers' choices. It will also help them realise that your store caters for all their health needs.