



SANBWA Bottled Water Standard development with NSF-CMi

The SANBWA standard had historically only included natural bottled water. The need for a new standard in the evolution of bottled water was thus imminent to include all categories of bottled water. As a result, SANBWA, in a quantum leap, recently assisted the Department of Health in developing legislation for bottled water, which came into effect in July 2007.

SANBWA also implemented the inclusion of all categories of bottled water in its own industry standards along with upgrading the original Guidelines & Standards for bottling lines in 2007. This included additional standards for the category 'prepared water' as well as incorporation of developments in legislation and best practice on an international level.

Says Charlotte Metcalf, technical manager of SANBWA, 'We then recognised the need for the upgraded standard to be benchmarked against international standards in order to be relevant and to add value to member bottlers' and retailers' current quality and safety verification procedures. The standards have been upgraded for recognition and acceptance by bottlers and retailers. The standard's format also needed to be more compatible with other standards used by the food industry but at the same time retain the specific distilled wisdom (the know how and best practice specific to bottled water that has been in practice since SANBWA's inception), from the pioneers in the industry.'

With the new Consumer Protection Act, increased retailer and consumer concern about food safety and strong industry focus on brand protection, the SANBWA Board approached NSF-CMi to further develop their new bottled water standard. 'This approach confirms SANBWA's commitment that its members can demonstrate due diligence and reduce food safety risks and compliance with local and international standards and regulations,' says Metcalf.

Why NSF-CMi?

'NSF-CMi, the global testing and certification company committed to public health protection, is a highly respected organisation that plays a leading role in the global food safety market. NSF-CMi is excited about the new standard, which, once completed, will materially enhance the perception of bottled water safety and integrity among customers in South Africa. NSF International is well known for its strong technical expertise, integrity and independence, especially in the beverage sector', explains Wouter Conradie, managing director of NSF-CMi Africa.



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NSF-CMI, a global and widely respected food assurance brand, leads NSF's international food assurance operations outside of North America, protecting consumers and enhancing business in the global food supply chain. It offers certification, consulting, technical and risk services which enable companies both to comply with legislative and industry standards and gain competitive advantage in their markets. NSF International is a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Food and Water Safety and Indoor Environment.

Benchmarking

'With the development of the new Bottled Water Standard for the South African National Bottled Water Association (SANBWA), we have thoroughly benchmarked several private and public beverage standards used internationally.

The new standard will be very comprehensive but pragmatic including all the relevant control points of global standards such as BRC, IFS, ISO22000, SANS 10330 SANS 1049 and the NSF Beverage standards', says Conradie. It is envisaged that it will also address food safety requirements of retailers, who are required by law to only sell goods that are safe.

The new standard will be compatible with most of the benchmarked standards. SANBWA will therefore be able to offer members additional BRC, HACCP and ISO 22000 accreditation, should they require it. This optional accreditation will be offered to members through accredited third party auditors that could perform these accredited audits in addition to the required annual SANBWA audit.', says Metcalf.

About the standard

Lu-Marie Sobey, project leader for NSF-CMI says, 'Although the standard is benchmarked against global food safety standards, it specifically addresses the unique requirements for safely bottling water – critical requirements which could easily be overlooked by generic food safety standards.



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We also sought input from people in the bottling industry locally and internationally to ensure a practical standard, and check that critical items relevant to bottled water were not overlooked.'

Scope

The new standard covers bottled water as defined in packaged water legislation, from various water sources and flavoured water in a single standard. Water sources include ground water (subterranean) and surface water which has gone through municipal treatment. To allow for future growth in the industry, the new standard also covers requirements for bottling of flavoured water (not currently covered under the legislation definition of packaged water). The requirements of the standard will be supported by a detailed guideline to give more information on how to achieve the standard.

Elements

The 6 main elements of the standard are:

Management commitment, quality systems, HACCP, resources (including pre-requisite programs), operational controls and environmental stewardship. The standard is designed so that processes that aren't applicable to bottlers, can simply be excluded.

Your comment on the draft standards

SANBWA appointed a Technical and Advisory Committee (TAC) at the 2009 AGM to finalise the standard. The TAC consists of technical and regulatory industry experts from SANBWA, NSF-CMi and DOH with NSF-CMi managing the project.

The TAC is in the process of conducting trial audits to thoroughly test the draft standard before it is finalised. The industry will have another opportunity to comment early in 2010. 'For a standard to be accepted, it must add value and be easy to understand. We look forward to industry response' says Sobey.

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