

# SANBWA AGM

**S**ANBWA's AGM was held on 28 May 2009 in Irene, Gauteng. The 13th annual meeting was bursting at its seams with a turnout of over one hundred, consisting of members, affiliate members, suppliers, prospective bottlers, media, industry associations and government representatives.

Some of the issues reported on during the closed member session highlighted SANBWA's excellent progress and involvement in many areas of the bottled water industry.

SANBWA commenced with its public relations campaign, 'Make a clear Choice' in August 2007. During this time the association received approximately R11 million worth of coverage from various media channels and resultant relationships with key journalists. Key messages revolved around safety, quality and environmental stewardship of members' water. SANBWA also participated at the International IBM GIO session on water in the Netherlands. An environmental committee was formed after the 2007 AGM where environmental standards were adopted as part of the SANBWA standards.

Challenges that were discussed focused on the global economic crisis, the environment and the role of social media. The crisis has impacted on most industries, and according to BMI, bottled water growth slowed during 2008/09 by about 5%. The environmental impact and responsibility of companies and industries were questioned and highlighted in the media. SANBWA and its members are committed to improving their environmental impact through various initiatives. SANBWA will also focus on providing accurate information to all industry stakeholders to separate fact from misconceptions. Social media is playing a much bigger role, where individuals have the platform to declare their opinions on any given subject. Bottled water has been heavily targeted in social media space. SANBWA's role would be to gauge the accuracy of information on the web and provide the correct information to stakeholders. SANBWA plans to interface with stakeholders through one-on-one meetings to develop a bi-monthly electronic newsletter.

SANBWA has embarked on an exciting project, developing new standards. SANBWA expanded current standards and guidelines over the past two years by researching and adding prerequisites for HACCP, best practice guidelines and other international requirements from Codex and WHO. This draft was recently benchmarked against GFSI and many other international accredited standards, by NSF-CMi, locally and internationally. NSF is a global leader in Food and Beverage Assurance, developer of over 70 US consensus standards, with a market share of over 80% for US product certification. NSF is also a service provider to over 12,000 companies in 100 countries and the collaborating centre of WHO for food safety, water safety and indoor environment. The NSF team found the current draft, prior to further benchmarking and development, to be comprehensive and well referenced, with strong technical content, hygiene, water resource management, facilities, equipment, processing systems and pest control. A Technical Advisory Committee was appointed at the AGM consisting of technical and regulatory industry experts along with the DOH and NSF-CMi. The TAC will finalise the revised standard, followed by trial audits and a period of comments from members and the industry. The new SANBWA standard will be set with the best global standards. It will be compatible with GFSI and ISO standards with flexibility to combine with other standards. SANBWA will offer additional HACCP and ISO 22000 accreditation through NSF-CMi. The SANBWA standard will aim to be the best beverage standard.

The afternoon session opened to non-members with presentations on 'Groundwater & Source Evaluation and Monitoring for Sustainability' by Julian Conrad of GEOSS Consultants. David Hughes from the Plastics Federation SA opened the debate on biodegradable plastic vs. PET recycling. Cheri Scholtz from PETCO reported on their PET recycling initiatives and progress. Shawn Henning from BMI Adcheck presented on bottled water trends – members were keen to see how the global downturn has impacted on South African bottled water sales. BMI expects a continued economic influence on the growth of bottled water, some benefits from the 2010 soccer world cup and established drivers such as health & wellness and convenience. They forecast further growth of functional waters.

