

# Pick 'n Pay

## on your side with quality

by Isabel Bässon

Pick 'n Pay believes that consumers place their trust in retailers to supply them with good quality and safe food products and their customers are their first priority. According to Karin Beyer, technical manager at Pick 'n Pay Corporate Brands, the customer's well-being, is paramount to the safety of the foods they sell.

For this reason Pick 'n Pay employs a number of food scientists, food technologists, as well as expert consultants to ensure that they apply, follow and monitor the highest food safety standards. Being on the side of their customers, Pick 'n Pay takes their consumers' concerns very seriously and consider it their duty to take appropriate and thoroughly investigated action when and where necessary, as well as to provide educational material and direct access to the scientific experts, says Beyer.

One of these food experts is Karen Beyer. And for the dairy industry it is good to know that they can rely on someone with a long background in the dairy industry. Beyer completed her BSc (Agric)(Hons) Food Science at the University of Pretoria, as well as a certificate in Retail Food Technology at Technikon SA and a number of external courses. Furthermore, she is a member of the South African Association of Food Science and Technology (SAAFoST), the South African Society of Dairy Technology (SASDT) and serves on the technical advisory committee of the Dairy Standards Agency (DSA).

In the early Nineties she worked as a researcher at the Animal Nutrition and Products Institute in Irene, after which she ran her own business, Die Melkvat. She also worked as a hygiene technologist and factory technologist, before starting in Pick

'n Pay in 2000 as a category technologist: dairy and acting packaging technologist.

Beyer's activities as technical manager include the managing and supervision of 17 food technologists in terms of the category technologist's function, as well as managing and supervising new product development. She also has to keep abreast with new innovations, both nationally and internationally. Customers being paramount to Pick 'n Pay's vision, Beyer is also in charge of managing and supervising customer complaints and recruiting competent personnel.

As part of the Food Standards Committee she is involved in drawing up and implementing standard operating procedures and company policies applicable to the technical division. The technical division of Pick 'n Pay also liaises with regulatory departments and lawyers and assists with revisions of legislation.

Pick 'n Pay has a number of procedures in place with regard to milk and the application thereof. They work closely with the Dairy Standard Agency, who monitors the quality of the milk in Pick 'n Pay's No Name range. Pick 'n Pay believes in food safety as an overriding principle, and therefore supports any action taken to expose dairies selling unpasteurised, poor quality and/or adulterated milk. The technical division of Pick 'n Pay has a good relationship with the dairy industry, working closely with them and the DSA, who often inform them of complaints received, as well as food safety concerns identified in the retail environment.

Pick 'n Pay guarantees that it only lists suppliers and dairies that follow the highest standards and can supply proof of high quality milk. All NNB and CHC dairy suppliers are visited on a

regular basis by Pick 'n Pays technologists and are audited by certified independent auditors. All suppliers of No Name milk are required by Pick 'n Pay to test their raw and pasteurised milk on a regular basis for. This is also monitored by Pick 'n Pay's technologists.

"Once we receive a test or audit result, the supplier is notified about the non-conformances and the food technologist work closely with the supplier to ensure that corrective action is taken," says Beyer. Should a supplier fail to improve and continue to supply product not conforming to the Pick 'n Pay standard, they are suspended until they can prove that the proper corrective action has been taken.

According to Beyer, the responsibility with regard to quality lies first and foremost with the producer, who should supply Pick 'n Pay and their customers with a good quality and safe product. The producer must have the necessary quality checks and testing in place to proof the safety of their products. Beyer stresses, however, that maintaining the cold chain is the responsibility of everyone handling a perishable product, including the customer. Because it is very difficult to establish where a break in the chain occurred, Pick 'n Pay expect their suppliers and stores to keep records and corrective actions of all fridges and cold rooms.

It is the technical team's duty to investigate each customer complaint properly and ensure that the supplier takes corrective action. Customer complaints are classified in three grades, where Grade 1 is a general complaint about the product quality or taste and Grade 3 are more serious complaints, such as food poisoning and foreign objects found in a product. With Grade 3 complaints the technologist deals directly with the customer, giving them feedback as soon as possible. In order to do this, they often have to do temperature checks and check how the products are handled at store level. They also have to provide feedback to the regional/general manager.

Pick 'n Pay's slogan, "We're on your side" lies in the centre of their operations, and clients can rest assured that they are buying safe, quality products at an affordable price when they buy the Pick 'n Pay No Name range. **M&JR**

