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# AB7 2011 a hive of local and international offerings

by Fidelis Zvomuya

This year's Africa Big Seven (AB7) exhibition recorded the best attendance ever in its 10-year history. The composite food and beverage trade show, the biggest on the African continent, attracted exhibitors and visitors from 54 countries, with a visitor total of 8 518, 11% more than in 2010.

According to John Thomson, managing director of Exhibition Management Services, organisers of AB7, 94% of visitors felt that the show was of value to the retail trade and had established valuable new business contacts.

He also said that almost all visitors indicated they would attend again in 2012, while 96% said they would recommend the show to their business colleagues. "That's very positive for us and very encouraging for the South African economy."

The list of foreign companies, including many from the African continent, participating in AB7 continues to grow with each year. This year's event saw companies from Brazil, Malaysia, China, Japan, Indonesia, the Ukraine, Thailand and Iran exhibiting, while visitors arrived from many other countries.

This growing attendance adds increasing value to all stakeholders, as more and more African countries are participating in agriculture-related trade, which is very encouraging, the event organisers says.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Dubai Export Development Corporation led a delegation of over 30 government

departments, free zones and private businesses that took part under the UAE pavilion. Included in this group were the Jebel Ali Free Zone, RAK Free Trade Zone, Hamriyah Free Zone, General Holding Corporation, Palletco, Pure Ice Cream Co Ltd, Diamond Meat Processing, Falcon Packaging Factory, Dubai Refreshments, DoFreeze, Integrated Plastics Packaging and the National Food Products Company.

On the first day of the exhibition, Gill Gilbert, marketing manager of Denova Products, manufacturers of a range of culinary oils, fruit juice nectars, squashes, cordials and dairy smoothies based in Limpopo, said that business was slow, but she expected it to pick up on the second and last days. She believes that the biggest value of the show lies in the fact that it brings different companies from all over the world together under one roof.

First-time South African exhibitor Creative Flavors enjoyed immediate success. "We exhibited at AB7 mainly to reinforce our brand and target African markets," said director Adri Stander. "We had many networking opportunities and got a lot of positive feedback and enquiries. As a result, we've made direct contact with Chinese suppliers and are in the process of tying up a contract with them."

Nalika Kodikara, Secretary of the High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was delighted with the results of this year's show. "Our main objective this year was to introduce our Ceylon Tea to

the African market. We made good contact with representatives from South African chain stores, an opportunity we never would have had without participating in Africa's Big Seven."

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"We have struggled for four years to get contracts from big companies," explained Jeffrey Dibatana, managing director of local distributor Lonkama Sales and Marketing. "We decided to visit AB7 to try and secure distribution contracts from beverage manufacturers, and we did. We concluded two distribution agreements at AB7, one with a Namibian brewery and one with a Northern Cape winery. One contract is already operational and near completion."

Raj Vala, owner of Zoomaratic Beverages, was also impressed with the results of his company's participation in this year's show.

Exhibiting as part of the Trade Times Pavilion, the company signed an export agreement at the show to export 40 000 boxes of its juice to Tanzania.

"Our presence at AB7 has increased our business tenfold," said Raj. "We have also received fantastic feedback from Zimbabwe and will be signing an agreement soon. We've also received a lot of enquiries from Botswana and Namibia."

Valentina Isaenko, head of the Republic of Belarus' department of export, said that the show has opened up new markets for her country's exporting companies. "This has become our window into the African market and so far we have received more enquiries than I anticipated."

"The diversity was fantastic," said Keith Jolliffe, CEO of Spectrascape, who attended AB7 to meet with new suppliers from India, South Korea, Argentina and Ecuador, and has subsequently signed agreements with suppliers met at the event.

"Most exhibitors were very knowledgeable about their products and very helpful with our enquiries. Touch and taste samples of most products were freely available."



- 1 Gill Gilbert, marketing manager of Denova Products, at the company's AB7 stand
- 2 Valentina Isaenko, head of Belarus' Department



- of Export, holding sachets of condensed milk manufactured by OJSC, Lapel Plant for Dairy Products, which she was promoting at AB7



- 3 South Africa's Marefa International, manufacturers of bottle filling equipment, filling machines, capping machines, labelling systems, conveyor systems and bottle rinsing machines, had a busy stand at AB7.
- 4 Pedro Tembe from German parent company CSB-System AG's subsidiary in South Africa, was on hand at AB7 to discuss the company's process systems software solutions with prospective customers.
- 5 A variety of companies from Malawi joined

- forces to promote their various products at AB7 and the exhibition stand was abuzz with discussions over the course of the event.
- 6 Juan Kotzee of Fruitime handing Emmanuel Maboko a sample of their apple juice
- 7 Nathalie Mandelkorn, marketing assistant of Onderberg Processing Coop, fruit juice manufacturers from Malelane on the banks of the Crocodile River, in Mpumalanga
- 8 Stephen Rathai from Coconut Juice SA, importers and distributors of a variety of coconut juice products.

According to Salman Khan of Kalahari Beverages: "This event is a great platform for business-to-business interaction, as many decision makers attend and that propels business." The company has been a regular

participant of AB7 since the early years of its existence. "We exhibit at AB7 as a form of proactive marketing to reinforce our presence in the market and attract new clients, explore new markets and get leads."



- 9 Kristel Koo, manager of La Trobe in Mauritius, which manufactures, imports and distributes a variety of foodstuffs. The company has also recently launched its own line of UHT milk and 100% fruit juice – Snowy UHT and Nature’s Juice. These products are produced locally in the company’s new factory in Tyack, which represents the largest investment in the Mauritian food sector over the past decades.
- 10 Rodger Baltzer Travertino, sales director of Trade Packaging, who exhibited at AB7 as part of the Brazilian plastics packaging delegation. The Brazilian packaging industry is the fifth largest in the world and enjoys significant government support in an effort to increase its exports of finished plastic products.

- 11 Thawicha Sanguanwaipanichkul, international sales representative for Ampol Food Processing from Thailand, who showcased a range of Thai food products, including their famous Thai coconut juice brands
- 12 Blendtonel’s Fruï Zest are suppliers of lemon and orange zest, as well as frozen mixed berries and fruit, and manufacture yoghurt fruit pulps, smooth pulps, drinking yoghurt syrups, smoothie bases, ice-cream ripples, cake toppings, dairy blend concentrates, fruit juice concentrates, jams and more. In addition, the company undertakes exclusive contract research and development, as well as contract packaging. Neels Swanepoel (right) and his team were kept very busy by interested potential customers at their AB7 stand. **M&J**