SRI LANKA FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION (SLFPA)

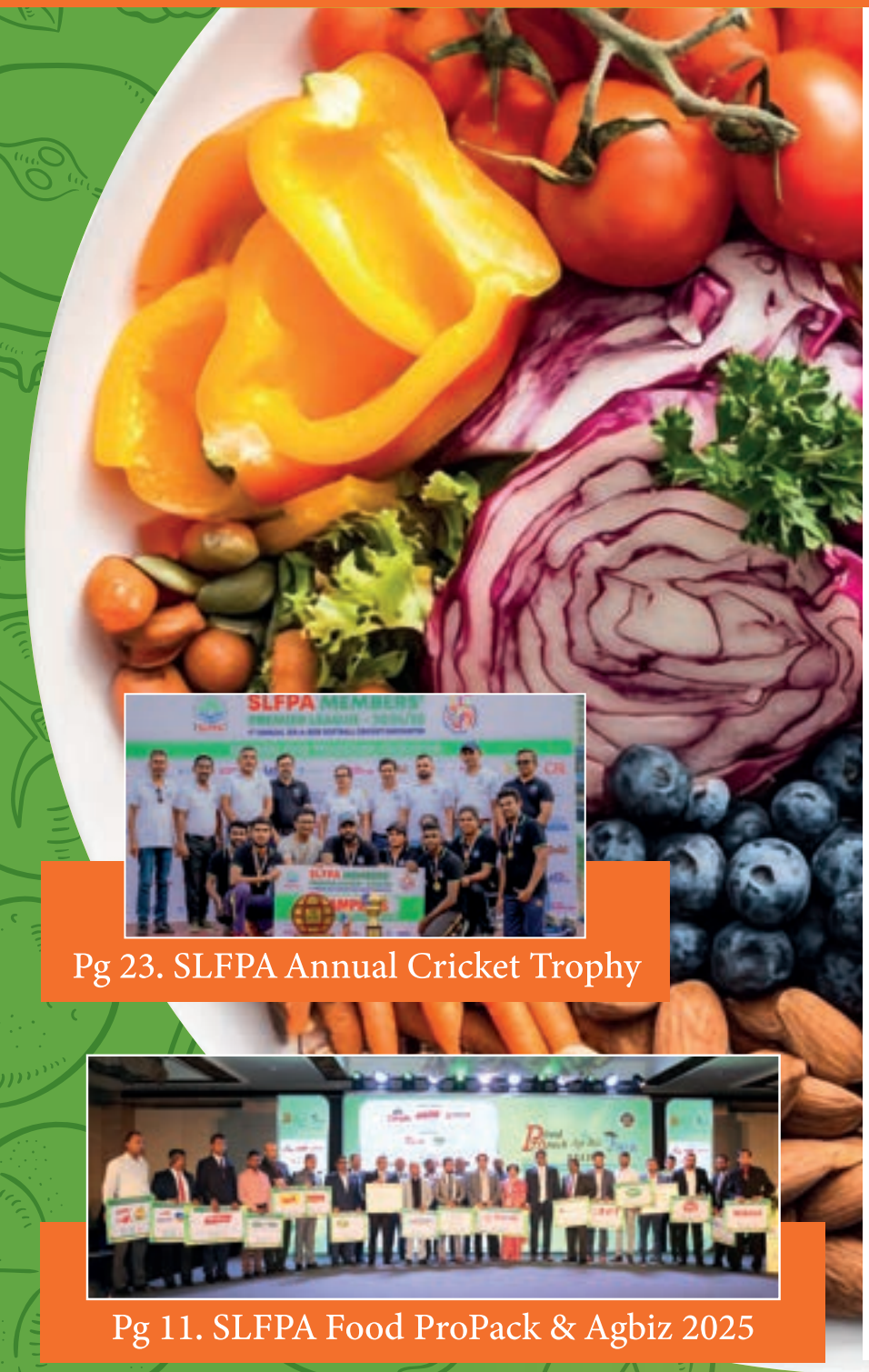
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

ISSN 2961-5844

NEWSLETTER

Excellence and World Class

Issue - 34
Mid Year Edition - 2025



Pg 23. SLFPA Annual Cricket Trophy

Pg 11. SLFPA Food ProPack & Agbiz 2025

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SRI LANKA FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION (SLFPA)
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am delighted to share a few thoughts for this year's Mid-Year Edition of the Newsletter.

We are very happy to announce that we have successfully acquired a property on Gothami Road in Colombo. We are now in the process of exploring various options to raise funds for constructing a building to house our Secretariat and other facilities. This marks a significant milestone for us as we embark on the next phase of our journey.

We have pursued many developments in the regulatory framework and had extensive discussions with various stakeholder groups, government officials, other chambers, and associations.

Regarding the labelling and advertising regulations, the FAC has agreed to incorporate most of the amendments suggested by the industry into an amended regulation and re-publish it. We are anxiously awaiting this new publication. The regulations are due to come into effect by July 2025. Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA) has taken all possible actions to ensure that food regulations are practical and feasible for implementation. Our efforts have focused on collaborating with industry stakeholders, government bodies, and experts to develop regulations that not only uphold food safety standards but also facilitate smooth compliance and contribute to the growth of the food industry.

With regards to food safety, the food handlers' program, in collaboration with the Ministry of Industries and the Food Control Administration Unit of the Ministry of Health, is now ready to be rolled out. The main objective of this program is to enhance the knowledge and importance of food safety among all stakeholders. The proposal we submitted to MOI and FAC has been approved, and we are now waiting to receive the formal letter of confirmation from the Ministry of Health prior to rolling out the program island-wide.

The efforts put in by the Institute of Food Science & Technology in organizing various forums are greatly appreciated. Connecting academia more with industry stakeholders is an area that needs attention, as there is a gap in knowledge sharing that must be addressed to improve standards. We need to establish more and stronger linkages between academia, industry, and grassroots organizations.

We are excited to announce that the 22nd edition of the Pro Food / Pro Pack exhibition, our main event of the year, will take place from August 22nd to 24th. The official launch was held at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel in March, with a distinguished gathering in attendance. Several achievements from last year's event were recognized and rewarded among the winners.

Highlights of This Year's Event

Innovative Pavilion: Organized by undergraduates, this pavilion will showcase the latest in food innovation and commercialization, crucial for the improvement of the food industry.

Knowledge Hub: We have arranged a separate area to enhance its scope and provide more opportunities for engagement with the industry.

Consumer Assistance Desk: This desk will guide new entrepreneurs in identifying opportunities, contacts, certification needs, packaging, machinery needs, and more. Counters representing various government bodies such as EDB, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Health, and certification bodies will be available to answer queries.

We encourage all stakeholders to participate in these activities, as limited availability is still open. Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect, learn, and grow within the food industry!

We hope to introduce a different concept, a food carnival highlighting the street Food concept at this year's event in place of "Innofood Fiesta Pavilion" introduced last year.

We successfully held the Six-a-Side Cricket tournament on the 15th of March, after many months of anxious waiting due to bad weather conditions that prevailed in the country at that time.

To conclude, I wish to thank our Immediate Past Presidents, the Executive Committee, and the Membership for their hard work and dedication over the past months in various matters pertaining to the food industry. I also extend my gratitude to the Editorial Committee, sponsors of the adverts, and those who contributed informative articles for publishing this newsletter.

Thusith Wijesinghe
President – SLFPA

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Innovative Vacuum Frying Technology For Preserve Vegetable & Fruits

Sri Lanka produces a wide variety of fruits (e.g., mango, pineapple, jack fruit, banana) and vegetables (e.g., sweet potato, pumpkin, okra, Bitter gourd, long Beans) suitable for vacuum frying.

Increasing the global consumer preference for healthy, exotic, and convenient snacks creates opportunities for Sri Lankan products in international markets. By adding value to raw produce, farmers can earn higher incomes.

Introducing vacuum frying technology to the Sri Lankan market is a strategic move that can benefit both local farmers and the global food industry. Sri Lanka's rich agricultural heritage and diverse range of fruits and vegetables make it an ideal location for producing high-quality vacuum-fried products. By lever-aging this technology, Sri Lanka can meet global demand for healthy, exotic, and premium snacks while improving farmers' livelihoods through better farm gate prices as well as reduce post-harvest losses.

Vacuum frying is an advanced food preservation method that involves frying fruits and vegetables under reduced pressure and lower temperatures compared to traditional frying. This process retains the natural colour, flavour, and nutritional value of the produce while creating a crispy texture. The absence of oxygen during frying also prevents oxidation, ensuring a longer shelf life.
Introducing innovative vacuum-fried vegetable and fruit production technology can revolutionize the food preservation industry; by focusing on quality, sustainability, and global market trends, businesses can achieve higher profit margins while meeting the demand for healthy, convenient and premium food products.

Investment in technology is key to success in this competitive sector. The challenges such as high initial investment, consumer awareness could be overcome with government grants for food innovation and low interest soft loans as well as strategic planning and effective marketing ,collaborate with farmer clusters as the primary stakeholder of the value chain to ensure steady supply of high quality raw materials with application of good agriculture practices for growing ,harvesting and handling products up to processor to meet processing standards, finally an attractive farm gate price.

Introducing vacuum frying technology in Sri Lanka is a transformative opportunity to add value to the country's agricultural produce, empower farmers, and tap into the growing global demand for healthy, exotic snacks. By focusing on quality, sustainability, and market-driven strategies, Sri Lanka can establish itself as a key player in the global vacuum-fried snack industry while improving the livelihoods of its farming communities.

Sunil Rodrigo
Dairy, Food Technologist/ Industrial Engineer

From Guilt to Gusto: Transforming Processed Foods for Health

In past decades, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) surged due to urbanization, dietary shifts, and sedentary lifestyles, becoming major public health challenges. In Sri Lanka, NCDs account for about 80% of deaths, with cardiovascular diseases (30-35%) and diabetes (10%) leading. In 2016 health survey revealed a 30% hypertension and NCDs at around 80%, while in developing countries, NCDs account for 60-70% of deaths, highlighting the urgent need for effective public health strategies include,

Reduced Sugar and Sodium: With rising awareness of the health risks associated with excessive sugar and sodium intake, food manufacturers are actively reducing these ingredients in their products. The average intake can exceed 100 grams per day, leading to health issues like obesity, diabetes, and dental problems. Salt consumption often exceeds the recommended limits of 5 grams per day, with average intake ranging from 8 to 12 grams. This is largely due to processed foods, which are high in sodium. High salt consumption is linked to health issues like hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

Clean Labels: Consumers are increasingly seeking transparency in their food choices. The clean label movement emphasizes minimal processing and recognizable ingredients. Brands are responding by eliminating artificial additives and preservatives, opting for natural alternatives. This trend allows consumers to feel more connected to the food they eat, knowing exactly what's in their meals.

Plant-Based Options: The plant-based food movement has gained significant traction, with many processed food companies introducing meat alternatives and dairy substitutes. These products cater to vegetarians, vegans, and flexitarians alike, focusing on high protein content and nutrient density, while also appealing to those looking to reduce their environmental impact.

Functional Foods: There's a growing interest in foods that offer health benefits beyond basic nutrition. Functional processed foods enriched with vitamins, minerals, probiotics, and super foods are becoming more prevalent. From fortified cereals to snacks containing gut-friendly probiotics, these products aim to enhance overall health and wellness.

The Role of food processing technology to light of Processed Foods nutrients

Advancements in food technology are reshaping processed foods through improved preservation techniques and natural flavourings, enabling healthier options without sacrificing taste. The rise of personalized nutrition allows for tailored products to meet individual dietary needs. Increased awareness of healthy eating, especially in developed countries, has driven demand for clean labels and functional foods, prompting manufacturers to reduce sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats while adding plant-based options. In developing countries, this shift is slower, with awareness influenced by socio-economic factors; many consumers prioritize cost over nutrition, resulting in higher sugar and salt levels in processed foods. Cultural influences continue to sustain traditional diets despite the appeal of Western convenience foods.

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Advertisement

"CoCo-YO" A Gut Friend in a Coconut Shell...!

In a world of tremendous food choices evolving as fast as the new technology, the demand for plant-based foods, low sugar desserts and dairy substitutes has never been higher. Have anyone ever wondered that we have a revolutionary option for this wave of demand? That is why the University of Sri Jayewardenepura proudly presents the new product "CoCo-Yo", a novel probiotic coconut-based dessert that redefines 'what a non-dairy yogurt truly can be'.

Born from months of dedicated research with a long-term vision for a healthier tomorrow, CoCo-Yo is not just another vegan treat for the shelf. It's a creamy, dairy-free, probiotic-rich dessert formula developed entirely from coconut milk (100%), tailored with a keen focus on health, inclusivity, as well as taste. It doesn't matter whether you are a vegan, lactose intolerant, or just someone who prefers a gut-friendly approach; CoCo-Yo is crafted to address all of them.

Why Coconut? Why Now?

Since the shift towards plant-based food consumption has gained momentum, coconut milk has emerged as a versatile, economically sustainable option. However, coconut milk isn't just such a tropical delight; it's a nutritional powerhouse, renowned for healthier fats, vitamins, as well as minerals. It provides a naturally creamy base as a better option for dairy yoghurt.

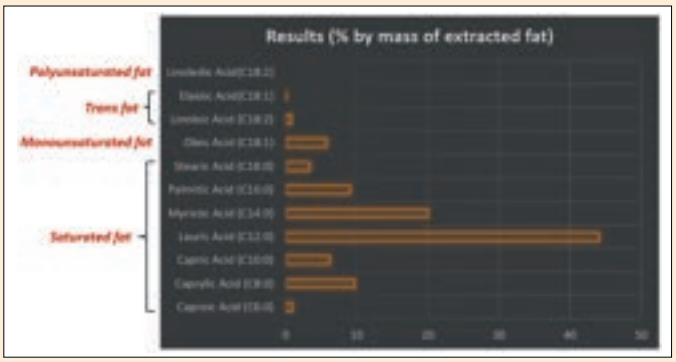

Figure 1 - Graphical representation of the Free fatty acid profile of CoCo-Yo. (Data collected through the GC-FID analysis; Agilent model 7890A GC

Yet, the revolutionary point is that CoCo-Yo taps into its potential. Unlike traditional yoghurts, which may not suit everyone due to some health consequences like lactose or milk protein sensitivities, CoCo-Yo is completely dairy-free. That is what makes it ideal for a growing population seeking plant-based or allergen-friendly alternatives.

The figure exhibits the free fatty acid profile of the product, which clearly shows that even though the fat content of the product is higher, the majority of the saturated fatty acids are medium-chain fatty acids, particularly Lauric acid, which provides significant health benefits.

Nutritionally enriched with added probiotics

As we know, a healthy gut is the ultimate key to overall well-being. CoCo-Yo promotes better digestion and immune support by introducing live, beneficial bacteria through fermentation. So, this is not just a dessert, it's also a probiotic punch which has been carefully crafted to nourish the body while providing you with a delicious palate.

Sweetness with no guilt.

As we needed to ensure that everyone, including the calorie-conscious, could enjoy our product, CoCo-Yo is designed with a mindful approach to calorie content. By incorporating stevia, a natural, non-caloric sweetener alongside cane sugar, a guilt-free indulgence that aligns with health-conscious consumers has been created.

A mission-aligned market innovation

CoCo-Yo is a timely innovation since this non-dairy vegan dessert formula is ideally projected to grow faster, driven by consumers worldwide looking for healthier as well as ethical and environmentally friendly food choices. Nevertheless, not all dairy-free products in the market hit the mark in terms of both nutrition and taste.

Yet, our CoCo-Yo stands out by being a vegan, lactose-free, gut-friendly, and low-calorie, simply a combination which not only addresses health-conscious consumers but also opens doors for commercial producers, especially for the export market looking to drive through the plant-based food culture.

A delightful treat with a PURPOSE

As developers, we believe that the food innovation concept is not just about creating something new; it's about creating something worthwhile. We believe that CoCo-Yo has the potential to revolutionize the non-dairy yogurt market, offering a superior alternative that caters to a diverse audience. With its unique combination of taste, health benefits, and environmental consciousness, CoCo-Yo is not just a product; it's indeed a lifestyle choice.

Authored by:

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SLFPA Organised Profood Propack & Agbiz 2025 Unveils Its 22nd Edition

The most awaited Food Industry Show, Profood Propack & Agbiz Exhibition, organized by the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA) together with Lanka Exhibition and Conference Services (LECS), was launched on March 5, 2025 at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo.

The event will be held from August 22nd to 24th at the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Exhibition and Convention Center at BMICH Colombo and is endorsed and supported by the Ministry of Industries, the National Agribusiness Council, and the Institute of Food Science and Technology Sri Lanka.

The exhibition is well known over the last two and half decades as SLFPA's flagship event to foster Food Industry advancement and drive economic growth in Sri Lanka. The event serves as a driving force, uniting leaders from the Food Industry, various stakeholders, and decision-makers in agriculture-based businesses, food processing industries, packaging and all service providers related to the Food Industry.

President of the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association, Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe, remarked, "As we near the 22nd consecutive year of this dynamic exhibition, we acknowledge its crucial role in fostering growth and sustainability within the agricultural and food sectors. This platform acts as a catalyst for professionals to explore state-of-the-art technologies, present innovative products and processes, and boost global competitiveness".
Co-Chairman of the Organizing Committee for Profood, Propack & AgBiz 2025, Mr. Aruna Seananayake, opined that the upcoming exhibition promises to be an outstanding gathering of industry leaders, innovators and food science graduates. He emphasized their unwavering commitment towards facilitating knowledge exchange through the "Knowledge Hub", which was introduced at last year's exhibition.

This year, the committee has expanded the Knowledge Hub to include a well-structured Consumer Assistance Desk (CAD), serving as a crucial touch point for new entrepreneurs seeking assistance and guidance in identifying opportunities. The exhibition will also showcase technological innovations and facilitate strategic partnerships within the sector. Mr. Seananayake expressed their dedication to delivering an event that exceeds expectations and propels the industry to greater heights, comparable to international food shows.
The exhibition provides numerous opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to showcase and promote their products. SMEs are crucial to the industry's growth, and this event allows them to gain exposure, find new markets, build relationships and explore potential collaborations with key stakeholders.

The event will feature a diverse array of products, services, and innovations related to agriculture, processed food and beverages, and packaging.

Participating in the Profood Propack & Agbiz 2025 exhibition provides SMEs with exceptional opportunities to broaden their reach, boost brand visibility, and establish strategic partnerships by engaging with key stakeholders and accessing a network of buyers and investors.

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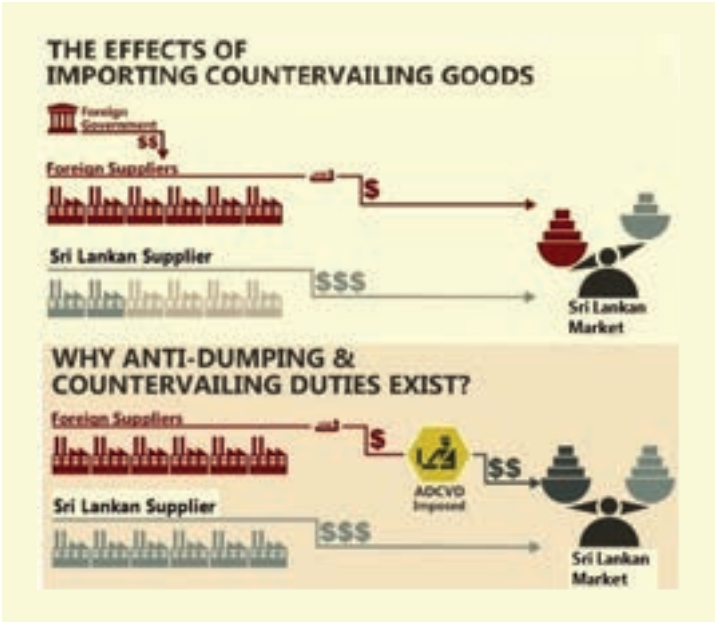
The Profood Propack & Agbiz Exhibition invites participants from all related industries and the public to engage in the event. Buyers from supermarkets, hotels, catering institutions, and exporters too are encouraged to attend.

More information could be obtained from www.profoodpropack.com or email: profood@saexhibitions.com.

Highlights of the Event

Can We Protect Local Food Industry from Dumping and Countervailing?

As we all know with the current competitive economic context with the increase cost of production and so many other challenges Sri Lankan food processors do face tragedy with unfair global trade practices such as dumping and countervailing. When we define the term "Dumping ", as per WTO (world Trade organization) If a company exports a product at a price lower than the price it normally charges on its own home market, it is said to be "dumping" the product. However, dumping is often mistaken and simplified to mean cheap or low-priced imports. It is a misunderstanding of the term. Thus, dumping implies low priced imports only in the relative sense (relative to the normal value) and not in absolute sense.

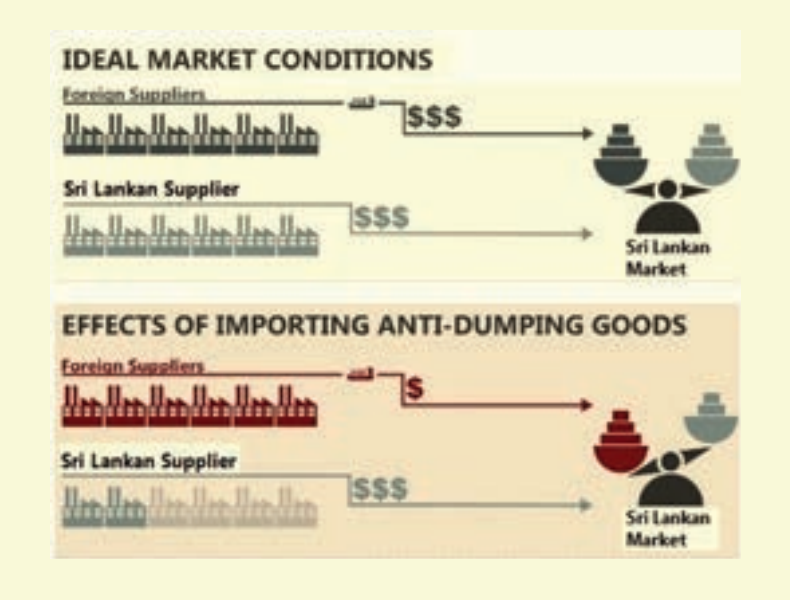


When we consider the negative impact one of the main impacts would be dumping creates a situation where foreign businesses can undercut local prices, making it difficult for local businesses to compete. To compete with those imports, local manufacturers have to lower their prices if not it can lead to a decline in sales for domestic businesses, potentially leading to closures and layoffs. In long run companies can not operate with low profit while cost of production incline. The loss of businesses and jobs can negatively impact the overall economy of Sri Lanka. This will create major socio-economic unrest in the country. It is important to understand this risk and take corrective and preventive measures. Even in global context , economic giants like USA taken their remedies after understating this risk.

At the same time importing countervailing good will have similar impact on local economy. This also can lead to unfair competition, forcing local businesses to close and resulting in job losses and a decline in standard of living. Countervailing duties, also known as anti-subsidy duties, are import duties imposed to offset the effects of government subsidies given to producers in the exporting country. These duties are meant to level the playing field for domestic producers who might otherwise face unfair competition from foreign goods subsidized by their governments. Essentially, they aim to neutralize the advantage gained by foreign producers through the foreign government assistance.

Sri Lanka has enacted laws to address this issue, including anti-dumping and countervailing duties.

Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duties Act, No. 2 of 2018 and the safeguard Act, No.3 of 2018 are the two main acts. These two acts are came in to force with the effect of 19th October 2020. Antidumping ad countervailing act address two main unfair trade practices that is dumping and subsidisation. Safeguard act addresses sudden surge of imports. Recently regulations also introduced and those regulations are cited as the as the Application for Initiating an Investigation on Imposition of Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duty Regulations of 2025.



This regulation has three parts:

1. Application for initiation on anti-dumping duty
2. Application on initiating an investigation on countervailing duty
3. Price undertaking procedure (by an exporter at any time during the investigation)

Even the process is lengthy with so many documentation regulators encourage local industry to make use of this opportunity. Investigations supposed to be conducted in a transparent manner with strict adhering to WTO guidelines. If anyone is further interested you may download it from the Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Food security website (www.trade.gov.lk) or request a soft copy from our SLFPA office.


PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

ANTI-DUMPING AND COUNTERVAILING DUTIES ACT, No. 2 OF 2018


The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

PART I : SECTION (I) — GENERAL

Rasika Seneviratne
General Manager - DIMO PLC

The Future of Ethical Business: Why Sustainability and Responsible Sourcing Matter




The True Cost of What We Consume

When you pick up a chocolate bar, a cup of coffee, or a seafood meal, do you ever stop to wonder how it made its way to your hands? Who grew the cocoa? Who caught the fish? More importantly, were they paid fairly? Were their rights respected?

The global food industry is built on complex supply chains and behind these supply chains are challenges like child labor, forced labor, unsafe working conditions and deforestation. However, with increasing regulatory pressure and shifting consumer preferences, companies are now being held accountable.

Why Sustainability and Responsible Sourcing Matter
Sustainability is no longer optional. Governments, particularly in Europe, are enforcing stringent regulations like the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), and the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) to ensure ethical sourcing and environmental responsibility.

For industries, responsible sourcing means:

With 85% of consumers preferring sustainable products, businesses that adopt ethical sourcing don't just stay compliant; they win customer trust and unlock new market opportunities.

- Fair wages and safe working conditions
- Transparent, traceable supply chains
- No child and forced labor
- Compliance with global sustainability standards

Key Focus Areas in Responsible Sourcing

1. Eliminating Child and Forced Labor in Supply Chains

Industries such as cocoa, coffee, seafood, and palm oil have long been associated with child and forced labor. Global markets now demand that companies prove their supply chains are free from unethical practices.

Solution: Peterson supports clients with supplier audits, risk assessments and corrective action plans.

2. Ensuring Living Wages and Worker Well-being

Many workers in agriculture and food processing earn

less than a living wage, making it difficult to afford basic necessities. Ensuring fair wages reduces poverty and improves workforce stability.

Solution: Peterson assists businesses in setting up supplier human rights performance management programs, ensuring fair wages and better working conditions.

3. Health, Safety, and Sanitation in Food Processing

From meat processing plants to seafood factories, unsafe working conditions have led to serious health risks. Some workers even lack access to clean drinking water.

Solution: Peterson helps food companies develop workplace safety policies, ensuring compliance with international labor and food safety standards.

4. Ethical Recruitment and Fair Employment Practices

Many migrant workers face recruitment fraud, high fees, and poor working conditions. Ethical recruitment practices ensure fair treatment, dignity, and proper employment contracts.

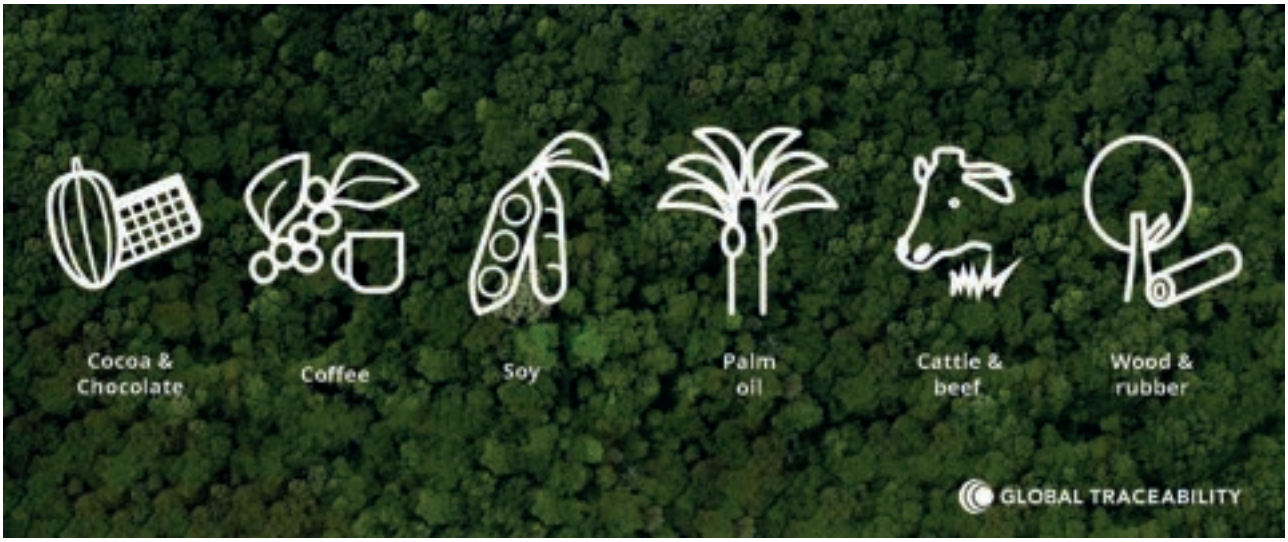
Solution: Peterson provides social compliance certification support to monitor processes and prevent exploitation.

5. Leveraging Technology for Sustainable Sourcing

Technology is revolutionizing supply chain transparency, helping businesses track ethical sourcing in real-time.

The EUDR & the Timber Connection

While tea, coconut milk, and spices are not directly covered by the EUDR, timber is and it's commonly used in boilers, tea factories, coconut processing units, and packaging (e.g., crates and pallets). If your product reaches EU markets, this indirect use of timber can still trigger compliance requirements. Being proactive with EUDR due diligence such as verifying land legality, performing deforestation risk analysis, and providing geolocation can give you a market edge and help ensure uninterrupted trade.



Dulini Wijeratne
Assistant Manager Business communications & Marketing
Peterson Project Solutions

Our past Heroes

Interview with ASOKA GOPALLAWA

4th Past President of SLFPA

Q1: Indeed, it is my great honor and privilege to interview a person like you in fact eldest son of the Mr. William Gopallawa, last Governor-General of Ceylon and the first non-executive President when Ceylon declared itself a republic in 1972. Dear Sir, I would like to start our conversation with your own self-reflection. How you have identified yourself. Who is Asoka Gopallwa? What is your vision and mission in life?

A: well thought out question to start with. I specialized in the agriculture field and want to develop agriculture and subsidiary field of food processing. I was involved in first supplying machinery and packaging items to the food industry. I am an entrepreneur, a professional who values talent and knowledge. For example, the food processing industry was seeking for knowledgeable talented people. One of my key objectives was to link the industry with university graduates. At the same time, wherever I go I study the processes and I am keen on bringing changes to improve the local industry process and profitability.

Q2: Great to hear that you ambition is to better Sri Lanka. We all know you are coming from the highly respected world-renowned family. Would you like to speak a little on your early stage of life and your educational background?

A: We lived in Matale. My father was an Urban Council (UC) Chairman at the time. Then I enrolled as a student at the nursery school of BMS Matale. While I was there, my father was appointed Commissioner of the Kandy Municipality. So, I was then enrolled at CMS Trinity College, Kandy. I continued at Trinity College until 1952; when my father moved to Colombo to become the Commissioner at the Colombo Municipality. While in Colombo, I attended to Ananda College. My father was very keen that I studied medicine. But I could not get the necessary credit in physics. So, when applying to the university, I applied to study veterinary science. Having been chosen for the university, I happened to meet Mr. Macrosti, a Canadian Professor of Agriculture in Kandy. He advised that I might be trying to waste 5-6 years of my life studying veterinary science and end up not getting employment. He said, why don't you shift to agriculture sciences. He said with a degree in agriculture I can find employment easily or even be self-employed. Heeding Professor Macrosti's advice, I applied for a transfer from Veterinary Sciences to Agricultural Sciences. My transfer request was approved and I entered the Agriculture Faculty at the University of Ceylon. So, in my first year at university, I was in Colombo studying science. In my second and third years, I attended lectures at Peradeniya. At that time, the degree in Agriculture was three years long.

Q3: Can you briefly discuss how you entered the industry and how you grew as a professional?

A: After university, I joined the Colombo Commercial Company (CCC). They had advertised for a person to promote their coconut fertilizer among the coconut growers. I applied and got the job. At CCC I engaged in field work, visiting the coconut farmers. While in Colombo, I worked in the lab doing analytical work.

Then in 1964, the government took a decision that coconut fertilizers can only be handled by Ceylon Fertilizer Corporation, (a semi-government entity),under the standard coconut fertilizer subsidy scheme. Before 1964, private companies such as Baurs, CCC and Sha Wallace could also supply fertilizer to the farmers. With the new government policy in place, I became surplus at CCC. The company offered me a position in their laboratory. However, I had an

offer from Shell PLC. By the end of March 1970 Shell warmed up. The Chemical Department of Shell PLC became Lankem Ceylon Chemical. In 1972, the Chief Officer and second in-command of Lankem left the company. I became the Acting Commander of Lankem as its most senior officer. When the Lankem Board of Directors changed, I decided to move out from Lankem. I then joined the Mikechris Group. This Group was engaged in exporting gems and bronze and managing hotels. In 1975, the estate companies were nationalized by the then government. In 1975 September-October government took company estates. Government was struggling to establish an office and manage the agency houses. And London people and brokers came and said that there will be no tea in London auctions which whole world will know nationalization will kill the tea industry in Sri Lanka. The Minister and the Chairman of the Janata Estates Development Board (JEDB) approached me and asked me to work with the private sector people to push tea to London. We have our own shipping, and I could manage that. I was then appointed as Acting General Manager of the Janata Estates Development Board (JEDB) From 1st April and End of July till the government move out I was there. I handed over Janata Estate with 206 million rupees in deposit and 76 million current account

As an agriculture professional, I enjoyed spending a lot of my time in the field. This enabled me to learn about the processes that were effective. I also learned about what processes did not work and allowed me to take necessary corrective and preventive measures. This understanding of the ground realities has helped me a lot to support the local food processing industry.

Q4: Can you briefly discuss how you corporate with Food Industry and as one of the pioneers of Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA)? What are the key initiative taken by you as the president of SLFPA?

A: While I was working in Shell and Lankem, I connected with industrialists and food producers. I provided non-farm related advisory works to friends engaged in the food industry. For instance, Mr. Mario De Alwis (founder and Managing Director of North Lanka Family Foods, a subsidiary of Ma's Kitchen) is a good friend of mine and we worked together on industry. I initially supplied small types of equipment, machinery and helped him in technical side with things I knew. Then food packaging machinery for local food industry. In doing so, I connected with the food industry and subsequently Sri Lanka Food Processors Association.

I joined the SLFPA as an associate member. At that time, there was a need to attract qualified professionals to participate in the manufacturing end of the food industry. To this end, I promoted the engagement of university graduates in the food processing sector. Initially, it was very challenging to get the food industry to recruit university graduates.

During the my tenure as President of the SLFPA, I decided to give a stall at Profood event to the University of Peradeniya – Agriculture Faculty. This stall was provided at the SLFPA's expense (gratis) to the universities as they did not have funds to support a stall at the event. Prof. Samaraweera from the University of Peradeniya brought along six of his graduates for the event. At the vent, these graduates interacted with the visitors and members of the food industry and discussed what they had achieved and observed in the field. At the end of the exhibition period, all six graduates were offered jobs in by the food industry actors. The following year, I invited other universities to participate at the SLFPA exhibition event.

As president of the SLFPA, I also collaborated with the National Agri-business Council (NAC) is to hold exhibitions in the rural areas including Ampara, Kilinochchi and Trincomalee, - to showcase products of SLFPA members while doing out-reach to university graduates from these areas. Each of those exhibitions provided the SLFPA an income of 1.5 million rupees. The initial such exhibition was funded with support from USAID. Even SLFPA could have do same having

Profood and Propack in multiple areas around the country.

Q5: We spoke lot about your professional life. Let us know bit about your family too.

A: My family, I have three girls. One is working in the USA. Other two are here in Sri Lanka. My eldest daughter is the Vice - President of a large U.S. company. The second daughter is development

consultant while the youngest daughter runs her own pet concierge service. My wife is a doctor of medicine. She worked for the government service, and then for the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) Dispensary Service. She retired as the Chief Dispensary Medical Officer from the CMC. They have support me lot.

Q6: Thank you sir for enlightening our readership with you vast experience and knowledge. To conclude this conversation, what is your advice to the Sri Lanka Food Processors industry of today.

A: This is a very interesting question. The food industry of Sri Lanka has evolved and grown considerably since my time at SLFPS. Given the current climate in the industry, I actually think the SLFPA should tie up more closely with manufacturers and experts and have them upgrade their products to meet sustainable global standards. Most of our industrialists do not want people to know their processes. They think that they will go and sell the process. But that type of thinking is not helpful for food processing industry of Sri Lanka. Additionally, our local factories need to bet upgraded to meet global standards and demand. Except for a few producers, others do not invest money on upgrades. It should develop and make it look noble.

Most of the food processing companies lack in-house technical experts. This must be addressed urgently, if Sri Lanka is to compete regionally or globally. In the current regulatory context, the local food industry must have technically qualified expertise at their manufacturing sites to address issues and food handlers must be trained . There is an urgent need for Sri Lanka's food processors to invest on products, process and people – in order to compete with other countries. So, more investment is a must!!

Interviewed by,
Rasika Seneviratne
General Manager - DIMO PLC

Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA)

C.D. De Fonseka &Sons WINS SLFPA 9th Annual Cricket Trophy

The Annual Soft Ball Cricket Tournament organized by Sri Lanka Food Processors Association was held on 15th of March 2025 at the Colombo Colts Cricket Club Grounds. Thirty Seven (37) teams comprising both men and women playing together from 30 member companies vied for the SLFPA challenge Shield. The tournament was conducted on league basis. It was helpful in creating a high degree of interaction, relationship, understanding and fellowship among the employees of the participating member companies.

The participated company teams represented the following categories- Processed Food, Processed Beverages, Machinery & Packaging, International Food Certification, Food Ingredients and Casual Dining. The tournament is a key event in the calendars of all members of Processed Food Industry, bringing professionals from various organizations together in a spirit of fun and sportsmanship taking the participating teams' families into account this year.

Photo Caption

Front Row: The Winning team of 9th SLFPA Six-A-Side Cricket Carnival – C. D. De Fonseka & Sons.

Back Row (From left to right): Mr. Hamilton Diaz (Past President of of SLFPA), Mr. Deepal De Alwis (Chairman of Cricket Committee), Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe (Presidentof SLFPA), Mr.Delano Dias (Immediate Past President of SLFPA), Mrs.Sandhya Fernando(Staff Member of SLFPA), Mr. Niroshan Dalpethadu(Committee Member of SLFPA), Mr. Vijitha Govinna(Committee Member of SLFPA) Mr.Aruna Senanayake (1st Vice President of SLFPA) Mr.Thusitha Ekanayake (Committee Member of SLFPA)

Team C.D. De Fonseka & sons were the winners and Team CBL Foods International (Pvt) Ltd were the runners up. The Plate winners were the Varun Beverages Sri Lanka . Man of the Match award was presented to Mr. A.A. Mujitha Udara of C.D De Fonseka & Sons & Woman of the Match award was won by Ms. M.D. Niroshangani of CBL Foods International (Pvt) Ltd.

Participants were showing immense interest on participating and grabbing gifts in parallel events such as Karaoke competition, dancing competition, and best marquee competition. Best Male Singer was the Dayal Fernando & Best Female Singer was the Nipuni Gallage SGS Lanka (Pvt) Ltd. Dancing Competition was so hot, and judges went troubled when selecting the best out of the best. Thus, they decided to select Winner & Runnersup – Male Winner was the Madawa Dissanayake from Perfetti Van Melle Lanka (Pvt) Ltd and Female winner Ms.Madushika Madumali from CBL Convenience Foods Lanka and male runnersup Mr. Nuwan Kumara from Cargills Convenient Foods (Pvt) Ltd & female runnersup Ms. Madushani from Cargills Convenient Foods Lanka and Best Tent was the Control Union Inspections (Pvt) Ltd

The sponsors of this year's tournament include Analytical Instruments Tech (Pvt) Ltd as the Platinum sponsor, Cargills Convenient Foods (Pvt) Ltd, Control Union Inspections (Pvt) Ltd & CBL Group as the Gold sponsor, Elephant House, SMR Consolidated and SGS Lanka as Silver Sponsors, Lanka Exhibitions & Conference Services Limited (LECS) as the service partner of the event. CMC Engineering GMBH, Nestle Lanka Limited, Coca Cola Beverages, Visvaka Marketing & Country Style (Pvt) Ltd are also sponsoring the event.

Event Highlights of the Event








Harnessing Novel Potential Spices - Authentication of Plant Species Belongs to the Genus Alpinia

Consumers are searching for ready-to-eat, safe, healthy foods with new flavours. There is a lot of potential to add different flavors to our cuisine, from natural flora and fauna. Spices and herbs have been used for centuries as food additives to enhance food flavour and as preservatives to extend the shelf life. Therefore, it is timely to investigate the potential of under-utilised, safe and economical herbs and spices as natural flavours, functional foods, and preservatives to control food-borne pathogens.

The authenticity of botanical products is a major concern nowadays as they are either being used as dietary supplements by the general public or being evaluated in research studies. The quality, efficacy, and safety of botanical dietary supplements can vary according to the quality and the chemical constituent profiles of the particular botanical specimen. Therefore, appropriate authentication of botanical supplements is important to provide a proper scientific approach to further develop a botanical product for human consumption. There is a wide range of authentication methods available, including botanical or morphological identification of the plant, to chemical and genetic approaches. Proper identification of collected plant material includes the collection of the material and keeping a representative sample of that material as a voucher specimen. Macro-characteristics, including fruits, flowers, and vegetative material, are often used as taxonomic keys for the identification of most plants.

The Genus Alpinia is a large genus with 200 species widely distributed throughout Indo-Malesia, South East Asia, to Queensland, China and Japan. There are seven species identified in Sri Lanka and listed under the genus Alpinia according to the key developed by Dassanayake and Fosberg (1983). Out of the listed seven species, we have given pictures of six species to authenticate and identify species by looking morphology of different plant parts, flowers, pods, leaves and inflorescence.

Table 1: Identified species using the key as in Dassanayake and Fosberg (1983) in Flora of Ceylon

Scientific name	Common name	Origin
Alpinia galanga	Maha araththa / Greater galanga	Nature's Secret (Pvt) Ltd. Horana,
Alpinia malacensis	Ran kihiriya	Bandaranayake Memorial Ayurvedic Research Institute, Haldumulla
Alpinia calcarata	Heen araththa	Bandaranayake Memorial Ayurvedic Research Institute, Haldumulla
Alpinia nigra	Kaluwa ala	Kegall
Alpinia abundiflora	Torch ginger/ Siddhartha	Kurunegala
Alpinia fax		Hotan plains
Alpinia rufescens		Not identified

1. Authentication of A. galanga - *Maha Araththa*

Galangal is a rhizome producing plant which is closely related to ginger and belongs to the family Zingiberaceae. Galangal has a characteristic fragrance ginger like odour as well as pungency with hot and spicy taste; hence, its rhizomes are widely used as a condiment in cooking shrimp, meat and tom yum soup in South East Asia. Galangal is not as common a spice in Sri Lanka, though it has much potential to be introduced and marketed as a spice in international trade. The major chemical compound was identified as 1' Acetoxychavicol (1'ACA). Galangal has a strong antimicrobial activity against Staphylococcus *aureus* and its safe limits were identified, and found that all tested concentrations in terms of acute skin, eye and oral toxicities were well above the therapeutic levels (2.5 mg/ml) for antimicrobial activity of the extract. Galangal is also used as a medicine for curing stomach ache, cough, asthma, bronchitis, inflammation, rheumatoid arthritis, colic, diarrhoea and as a carminative in China and Thailand.

Different plant parts used for the identification of *A. galanga,* are shown in Fig. 1. The leafy shoots were over 2 m, and the leaves were oblong-lanceolate and glabrous. The inflorescence was terminal, with numerous short branches. Corolla greenish-white. The labellum was white and veined with lilac.

Figure 1: Characteristic features of different plant parts of Alpinia galanga Shrub, inflorescence, rhizome (The Author)

2. *Alpinia malaccensis* (Burm.f.) Roscoe - Rankihiriya

A. malaccensis (Burm.) Roscoe is a perennial plant growing widely in the subtropical and tropical regions (Indo-China, Malaysia, Sri Lanka). It is a tall herb of about 3 m height and grows in evergreen forests. Its rhizomes are aromatic, fibrous, and thick, and its crude extract has strong antimicrobial activity against gram-positive bacteria. The major bioactive chemical was isolated as 1' Acetoxychavicol (1'ACA), as in galanga, and its safety limits were identified and reported as LD50 >2000 mg/kg body weight of Wistar rats. The in vitro cytotoxicity study using cell cultures showed that there were no observed apoptotic/necrotic cell death and DNA damage on the tested 2 µg/ml non-toxicity concentrations for lung , kidney and liver cells and fibroblast cells . *A. malaccensis* is cultivated as an ornamental in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. This tropical plant is becoming a popular landscape plant due to its tolerance to drought, winds and cold conditions.

According to Fig. 2. Leaves 3-5 cm rounded pubescent inflorescence slightly curved and unbranched, Corolla white, tube labellum yellow orange, heavily lined with scarlet, without claw.

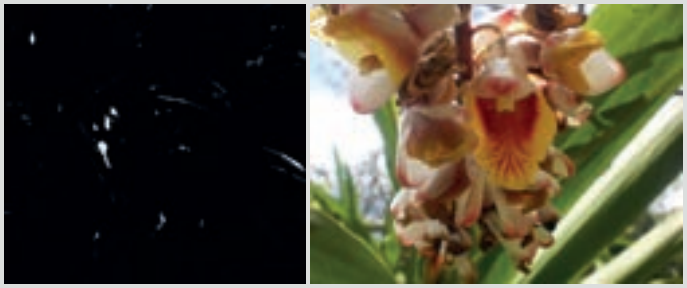


Figure 2 : Characteristic features of different plant parts of *Alpinia malaccensis* -Shrub, Inflorescence and Rhizome. (The Author)

The details of the rest of the species *Alpinia calacarata Roscoe (Heenaraththa), Alpinia nigra, Alpinia abundiflora, and Alpinia fax* will be published in next issue as a continuation.

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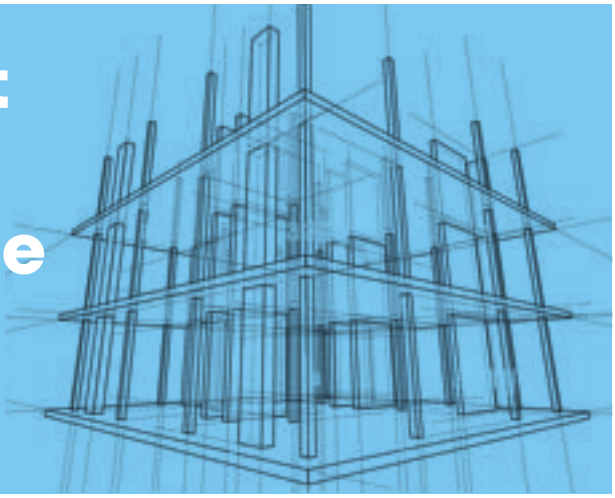
SLFPA Secretariat Building Project – A Milestone for the Food & Agri Business Sector



The Sri Lanka Food Processors' Association (SLFPA) is proud to announce a major milestone in our journey to support and advance the country's food and agribusiness sector. We have successfully acquired a commercial property on Gothami Road, Borella, which will soon become home to a state-of-the-art, multi-story Secretariat building. Currently in the early planning stages, we are in the process of engaging architects and consultants to design the new facility. The proposed building, spanning approximately 20,000 square feet across seven floors, will serve as a dynamic hub for the industry.

It will feature:

- Office spaces
- Boardrooms and meeting rooms
- Auditoriums
- Training and demonstration kitchens
- Laboratory facilities
- A rooftop function area and member lounge
- Business incubation facility
- Retail space for factory outlets
- Ample on-site parking

In keeping with modern sustainability standards, the facility will be designed according to green building principles. It will incorporate energy-efficient systems, solar power generation, rainwater harvesting, and water conservation measures with the goal of achieving LEED or Green Star certification.

To bring this vision to life, SLFPA is seeking support from stakeholders, partners, and donors. Strengthening institutional infrastructure is essential for empowering industry associations and chambers—paving the way for a more vibrant and competitive food and agri-business sector in Sri Lanka. We invite you to be part of this transformative journey.

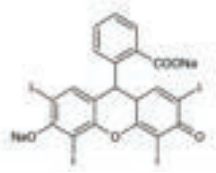
Erythrosine (INS 127): A Synthetic Food Colouring Under Global Scrutiny

Erythrosine (INS 127), also known as E127 or FD&C Red No. 3, is a bright cherry-pink synthetic dye long used to boost the visual appeal of food and pharmaceutical products. Commonly found in confectioneries, beverages, baked goods, and even medicines, this dye is chemically derived from fluorescein—a compound produced using petrochemical substances like phthalic anhydride and resorcinol. While its vivid colour has made it popular in the food industry, growing scientific scrutiny has cast a shadow over its safety. Emerging research has linked Erythrosine to potential health risks, leading regulatory bodies in several countries to reconsider its approval for use in food products.

Chemistry of Erythrosine

Erythrosine, a member of the xanthene dye family, is structurally defined as a tetraiodinated derivative of fluorescein. The xanthene core—consisting of two benzene rings fused to a central pyran ring—imparts the dye's characteristic pink-red fluorescence and vivid colouration.

The presence of four iodine atoms in Erythrosine enhances both its molecular weight and its intense colouration. However, like other xanthene dyes, its chromatic properties are sensitive to environmental factors such as pH and light. Under certain conditions—particularly exposure to light and fluctuating pH levels—Erythrosine may undergo photodegradation, resulting in colour fading or reduced stability over time.



Chemical structure of Erythrosine

Health Impacts of Erythrosine

Once widely regarded as safe, Erythrosine (FD&C Red No. 3) is now under intense scrutiny due to mounting scientific evidence of its potential health risks. Animal studies, including a pivotal long-term carcinogenicity study, have shown that high doses of Erythrosine can induce thyroid tumors in male rats. These findings led the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to classify the dye as a Group 2B carcinogen—possibly carcinogenic to humans. In January 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) responded by revoking its authorization for use in food and ingested drugs, citing its legal obligation under the Delaney Clause, which prohibits the approval of any additive found to cause cancer in animals.

Beyond cancer concerns, behavioural studies have also raised red flags. Research funded by the UK Food Standards Agency, notably the McCann et al. (2007) study, revealed that synthetic dyes like Erythrosine, especially when consumed alongside preservatives such as sodium benzoate, may trigger hyperactivity in children. While individual exposures may remain within acceptable daily limits, the cumulative intake—particularly among vulnerable populations like children—warrants a cautious approach.

Global Regulatory Action

Concerns about the safety of Erythrosine have led to stricter regulations in many parts of the world. Recently, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) took a major step by accepting a petition from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and other health advocacy groups to ban the use of Erythrosine in food and orally consumed medicines. This decision was based on strong scientific evidence showing that the dye can cause thyroid tumors in male rats.

Under the Delaney Clause in the U.S. Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, any additive shown to cause cancer in humans or animals cannot be legally approved for use. As a result, the FDA has concluded that continued use of Erythrosine in consumable products is no longer allowed (Federal Register, 2025). This regulatory move marks an important shift in global food safety standards and may influence policies in other countries as well.

Safer Alternatives

As the food industry moves away from synthetic dyes like Erythrosine, natural colorants—such as beetroot red (INS 162) for red hues, paprika extract (INS 160c) for orange-red tones, and curcumin (INS 100) for yellow-orange shades—are gaining popularity as safer alternatives, depending on the intended colour profile. These alternatives not only provide appealing colour but also come with additional health benefits and fewer toxicological concerns.

Conclusion

In light of increasing scientific scrutiny and evolving global regulatory trends, the continued use of Erythrosine (INS 127) in food products raises significant public health concerns. Evidence linking the dye to potential carcinogenic and neurobehavioural effects—particularly in vulnerable populations such as children—underscores the need for precautionary action. The proactive steps taken by several countries, including the proposed ban in Sri Lanka, reflect a commitment to safeguarding public health through science-based policy. Transitioning to safer, natural colour alternatives not only addresses these safety concerns but also aligns with the growing consumer demand for clean-label and health-conscious food choices. Ensuring the visual appeal of food should never come at the cost of safety—a principle at the heart of modern food regulation.

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