SRI LANKA FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION (SLFPA)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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NEWSLETTER Excellence and World Class

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

Dear Members, Members of Executive Committee, Friends of the SLFPA, as we draw close to the end of the year, it is my privilege to share our Association's past activities and plans for the year ahead. Your continued commitment and collaboration have made 2025 a remarkable year for the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association

.

- **Strengthening Food Safety and Public Health**

  in November, we launched our Food Handler Training Program in Kesbewa and Piliyandala, targeting small and medium-scale food preparation units, school canteens and street food vendors. One hundred food handlers and entrepreneurs participated in hands-on sessions covering personal hygiene, sanitation, and hazard prevention. These newly acquired skills not only elevate the quality of their products but also safeguard consumer health—advancing our shared goal of nationwide food safety and security.

- **Regulatory Engagement on Labeling and Advertising**

  Working closely with the Ministry of Industries and the Ministry of Health, we succeeded in highlighting industry concerns and securing several grace periods under the previous gazette notification. Regrettably, the most recent amendment version did not reflect the extended timelines our members required to comply fully. Our Executive Committee is actively pursuing further dialogue with the Minister of Health to strike the right balance between consumer protection and industry readiness.

- **Pro Foods ProPack Exhibition**

  The key event in our calendar, the annual Pro Foods ProPack exhibition which was held in August drew record participation. I am particularly proud of the new Industry Help Desk concept, which provided on-the-spot regulatory guidance and technical advice-an instant hit with exhibitors and visitors alike. This service will become a permanent feature in future exhibitions.

- **Annual General Meeting**

  In September, we gathered at the Kingsbury Hotel for our AGM. We reviewed the year's financial performance, elected new committee members, reviewed and reaffirmed our strategic priorities.

- **New Secretariat Building**

  After a rigorous selection process, we have appointed a lead architect to design our new secretariat building. We will review design concepts and ensure our new headquarters reflects the SLFPA's vision for the future.

- **Looking Ahead**

  2026 promises to be another busy and exciting year. We will continue to press for sensible regulations, enhance capacity-building initiatives and explore collaborative projects that bolster food security across Sri Lanka. Your active participation and feedback remain the lifeblood of our Association.

Finally I extend my sincere gratitude to every member and the Executive Committee for your dedication. I wish you and your families a peaceful festive season and look forward to advancing our collective goals in the New Year.

Thusith Wijesinghe
President
Sri Lanka Food Processors Association
Chairman/Managing Director Trans Continental Packaging & Commodities Pvt. Ltd.

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"**To delight our consumers,** Aromatic Laboratories (Pvt) Ltd proudly presents Flavorome Milk-shake Flavours — launched for the first time in Sri Lanka. Available in seven delightful varieties, each flavour combines both taste and colour, offering an instant and easy way to create delicious milkshakes that your family and guests will love."

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From Waste to Wealth

Sri Lanka's Food Processors need to embrace the Circular Economy

Sri Lanka generates approximately 7,000 tons of solid waste daily, with food waste accounting for about 65% of it, which is around 3,963 tons per day.

Can we do something about this?

We should ideally adopt every feasible measure to minimise waste. The adage "waste is a sin" was a valuable lesson we learned during our childhood.

What is circular economy

In a world increasingly conscious of sustainability, the linear model of "take, make, and waste" is rapidly becoming obsolete. For Sri Lanka's food processing industry, embracing the circular economy is no longer just a buzzword; it is a strategic imperative for long-term growth and resilience. By minimizing food and plastic waste, our sector can unlock new revenue streams, reduce operational costs, and build a more sustainable and competitive brand, both locally and on the international stage.

The challenge is significant. Sri Lanka reportedly faces substantial food loss and waste, with a considerable portion of our daily food waste attributed to the food sector. At the same time, single-use plastic (SUP) from food packaging contributes heavily to plastic pollution, posing a threat to our environment and tourism industry. Fortunately, industry leaders and global initiatives are providing a clear roadmap for change.

The Business Case for Circularity

Moving towards a circular model offers tangible benefits that directly impact the bottom line. For processors, the most immediate gain is cost reduction. Optimizing production processes to minimize spoilage and waste, for instance, leads to lower raw material costs and reduced waste disposal expenses. But the true innovation lies in turning waste into new, high-value products.

Imagine expired bread being repurposed into animal feed supplements, or fruit peels and seeds being used to create natural food colorings and flavorings. Several innovative Sri Lankan companies are already exploring such "waste-to-wealth" concepts. These initiatives not only generate new products and revenue but also build a powerful brand narrative that appeals to environmentally-conscious consumers and foreign buyers alike.

Frequently, news and social media reports indicate that farmers are unable to sell their produce, particularly during inclement weather conditions. This presents a unique opportunity for semi-processed food operators to establish operations in the dehydrated or fermented food sectors.

Actionable Strategies for All Processors

Whether you are a small and medium enterprise (SME) or a large-scale manufacturer, there are practical steps you can take to move toward circularity.

- For SMEs: Start with simple, high-impact changes. Conduct a waste audit to understand where you can make improvements. Optimizing your inventory management can prevent spoilage. For waste that cannot be eliminated, explore small-scale upcycling. For example, excess fruit pulp could become the base for new jams, sauces, or nutritional powders. Look for local partnerships with farms or composting facilities to handle organic waste.

- For Large Corporations: Invest in advanced technology and strategic collaborations. Explore the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for more accurate demand forecasting, which can significantly reduce overproduction and food waste. Partner with specialist recycling firms to create closed-loop systems for plastic packaging. Consider implementing eco-design principles to ensure your products and packaging are designed for a cycle of reuse and recycling.

Sustainable Packaging: A Critical Piece of the Puzzle

The circular economy is not complete without addressing packaging. The industry must move away from a reliance on single-use plastics towards more sustainable alternatives. This includes:

- Exploring reusable and biodegradable materials that meet safety and quality standards.

- Optimizing packaging designs to reduce material usage without compromising product integrity.

- Collaborating with recycling networks to ensure a high recovery rate for materials that can be reused in a circular loop.

The Path Forward: Collaboration and Innovation

Ultimately, the journey to a fully circular food sector requires collaboration across the entire value chain. Processors must work with farmers to minimize food loss at the source, and with retailers and consumers to reduce post-consumer waste.

The European Union-funded "CIRCULAR" project in Sri Lanka, provides an excellent example of such collaboration, bringing together key stakeholders to increase the recovery and processing of food waste. This kind of initiative demonstrates that support is available to those who wish to innovate and create a more sustainable food system.

By taking proactive steps to embrace the circular economy, Sri Lanka's food processors can secure a more prosperous and sustainable future. This shift will not only safeguard our environment but also enhance our industry's global reputation, proving that green practices are indeed good for business.

Let us unite to make our small contributions to reduce waste, thereby preserving our planet for future generations to enjoy more fully.

Shiron Jayakody
Shiron is the Chief Executive Officer of Texton Pvt Ltd

Authentication of plant species belonging to the *genus Alpinia*

1. Alpinia calacarata Roscoe (Heenaraththa)

Heen araththa is popular as a medicine in Ayurveda to treat inflammation. This plant is a widely spread shrub. Its rhizome is not aromatic as A. galanga or A. malaccensis. The major chemical component is 1'8 Cineole. Its crude extract did not show strong antimicrobial activity against bacteria. According to Fig. 3, Leaf stem is slender, nearly 1 m high. Leaves sessile linear-lanceolate, acuminate, narrowing towards the base, glabrous on both surfaces, margin with well-spaced. Similar to A. malaccensis, A. calacarata inflorescence is unbranched, terminal. No Bracts. Flowers in pairs, Labellum obovate, 2-3 cm long, white, lined rose purple.

Figure 3: Characteristic features of different plant parts of Alpinia calacarata - Shrub, Inflorescence, Rhizome. (The Author)

2. Alpinia nigra (Gaertn.)

A. nigra rhizome is not aromatic at all. Rhizome is not hard as other species. Similar to Heen Araththa its crude extract did not show strong antimicrobial activity against tested bacteria.

As shown in Fig. 4. Leafy stem to 3 m. Leaves 50 x15 cm linear- lanceolate, acuminate,rounded entire, pubescent sheeths glabrous. The inflorensce racemose, with well spaced cincinni, bracts membranous. Corolla -tube with Lobes 1-1.3 cm long, linear -oblong, the dosal lobe wider. It has a black fruit 2 cm in diameter

Figure 4: Characteristic features of different plant parts of Alpinia nigra grown- Shrub, Inflorescence, Fruit, Rhizome. (The Author)

3. Alpinia abundiflora Burtt & Smith

A. abundiflora is gaining popularity and can be seen as a home garden plant due to its floral characteristics. People refer to it as Siddhartha flower. The rhizome has no strong aromatic flavour and its crude extract did not show strong antimicrobial activity against the tested bacteria. As in Fig 5 Leafy stem exceeding 3 m. Leaves sessile, oblong or narrowly lanceolate. The inflorescence capitate, Sterile Bacts red in colour glaborus. Calyx 1-1.5 cm long tubular unilaterally split and glabrous. Corolla tube slightly exceeding the calyx.

Figure 5: Characteristic features of different plant parts of Alpinia abundiflora - Shrub, Inflorescence, rhizome. (The Author)

4. Alpinia fax Burtt & Smith

Alpinia fax is an uncommon plant native to Sri Lanka. The rhizome has no strong aromatic flavour like Galanga. The A. fax rhizome crude extract needs to be researched for its chemical composition, antimicrobial, antioxidant activities and toxicity studies. According to Fig 6 Leafy stem to 2 m high. Leaves sessile, lanceolate acuminate, attenuate at the base. Inflorescence truncate 10 cm in diameter, born separately from the leafy stem on a 30-50 cm sheath-covered peduncle; there are two types of bracts as sterile bracts and fertile bracts. The sterile bracts are reddish purple, 3-6 cm long and up to 3 cm wide, oblong. Fertile bracts are at the base of the inflorescence, becoming narrow and longer towards the top of the inflorescence. Few white flowers can be seen from some bracts.

Figure 6: 6 Characteristic features of different plant parts of Alpinia fax- Shrub, inflorescence, flowers of the infloresence (The Author)

Dr. Nimsha S Weerakkody
(BSc. Peradeniya, MSc. Peradeniya, PhD Queensland, MASM)
Senior Lecturer,
Dept. Agricultural and Plantation Engineering
The Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Sri Lanka

An Exclusive Interview with SLFPA Visionary Past President Mr.Nanda Kohona

We recently had the distinct honour of having a personal interview with Mr. Nanda Kohona, a highly admired industry veteran, former President of the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA). With a career spanning 36 years in Export Marketing, Mr. Kohona has been a key driver in developing Sri Lanka's export market, particularly for spices, and has left an indelible mark on the SLFPA itself.

The Professional Journey

Q: How do you like to identify yourself, and what is your self-reading?

A: I studied for a Food Technology programme at the CFTRI/University of Mysore, India and subsequently studied for EDBA from the University of Colombo and finally the PG.Dip.in Marketing /SLIM. I shifted from my initial career in Production Management to Export Marketing on, seeing its immense potential and the broad areas open to learn more. My focus now is on the Spice industry, and I have worked previously at firms such as Hemas, Sivermills etc. Most of my career had been in the exports of Spices and there is no end to knowing what Spices are and I'm sure there is more to learn, with the world changing every day. Anyway, with what I have gone through that I have gained a wide knowledge and experience on Sri Lankan Spices and the industry.

Q: What are your current external advisory roles?

A: Currently, I am the Chairman of the Spices & Concentrates Advisory Committee for the spice sector of the Ministry of Industries and the Export Development Board (EDB). I was also the Past-Chairman of The Spice Council of Sri Lanka.
The Formative Years of SLFPA

Q: Could you brief us on how you first got involved with the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA)?

A: That was way back in 1996 when I joined the SLFPA. I got involved in SLFPA through the Agricultural Enterprises Program (AgEnt), funded by the USAID at that time which created the National Agri Business Council (NAC). There were around 20-22 associations in the NAC and SLFPA was one of them. NAC was focused in developing and assisting the agriculture and the farming sector of Sri Lanka. They opened the avenues and opportunities for the members to move out to the international markets and this enabled us a lot to gain very useful knowledge of the outside world.

Q: You were one of the early past presidents. Can you recall the early challenges and key initiatives from that period?

A: Yes, The "Pro Foods" Exhibition was the biggest challenge undertaken by the SLFPA, originating as an idea by Mr. Mario Alwis (President) and approved by the Executive Committee, with the goal of creating a distinct advantage for Sri Lankan agro-based producers and exporters to gain knowledge and promote their products locally and internationally. As Secretary, alongside Mr. Alwis and the late Treasurer Mr. Fernandopulle, I supported this endeavour, which also ran parallel to the "Hawkers Street Food" show at Independence Square—a separate SLFPA event that arguably birthed the Street Food culture now prevalent in Sri Lanka. Although the very first "Pro Foods" exhibition resulted in a financial loss, the committee remained dedicated,

demonstrating exceptional teamwork to push forward, improve, and ensure its future profitability.

Q: What foundational changes did you implement as the president?

A: As President (2006-2007), we implemented key foundational changes: we significantly strengthened the link between SMEs and the government via the PFDI with the Ministry of Industry, which secured essential funding and support for members. We also effectively bridged the gap between academia and industry by inviting four universities' Food Science faculties to showcase new research products, some of which were commercialized. Furthermore, we built strong international relationships with food associations in India (APEDA) and Thailand, resulting in substantial foreign participation at the Pro Foods Exhibition. Finally, we coordinated successful, part-funded group study tours for SLFPA members to the THAIFEX FOOD Exhibition for two consecutive years, exposing the local industry to international innovation in product development and packaging.

Vision for the Future

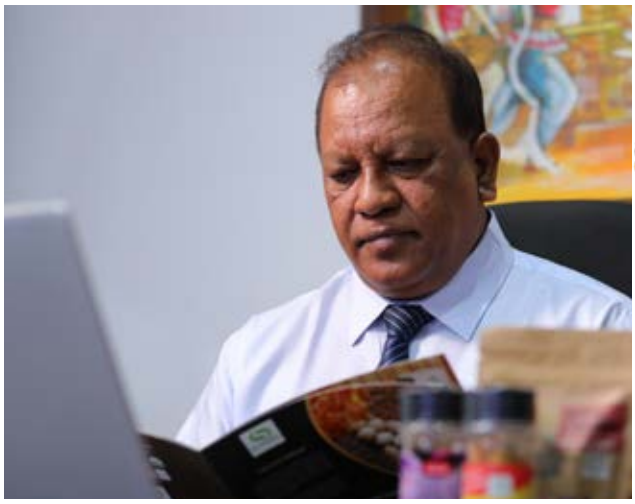
Q: What is your reading on current SLFPA? Do you have any suggestions?

A: While pleased with the SLFPA's immense growth and diversification, the association must aim higher, specifically targeting for the Pro Food exhibition to become the most popular and identified international food exhibition in Southeast Asia. This goal is achievable with the current enterprising committee, by planning and working toward the scale of successful global events like Thaifex, SIAL, and Anuga. Furthermore, I am very supportive of the new SLFPA building project, viewing it as an excellent and valuable investment of accumulated ProFoods Exhibition funds rather than holding them in the bank. This project should become a state-of-the-art food industry hub, ideally incorporating an in-house Training Centre, a library, an affiliated independent Laboratory for product analysis, a product display area, and facilities to host foreign delegations.

Q: Since you have great deal of experience on food exports are there any key strategic goal for Sri Lankan food exports?

A: Yes- We must aggressively brand our processed and packed food products, both locally and internationally, drawing inspiration from the success of Indian and Thai food brands.

Achieving top-tier status requires the government and private sectors to work together to internationally brand



"Sri Lankan Foods." Our overseas missions must play a vital supporting role in this effort.

If we lack overall production competitiveness, we should focus on niche markets that offer premium prices. The success of products like specialized Cheese, Coffee, and Wines globally proves the value of this approach.

A prime example is Ceylon Cinnamon, which has achieved GI-Status (Geographical Indication) and is successfully marketed at a high level with no competition. Securing GI-Status for more agricultural products is the right way forward. Singapore, despite its limited agricultural land, is a major processed food exporter in Asia; their model offers valuable lessons on competing in the global market.

Q: To conclude this conversation What is your final message to the food industry?

A: Food is a fundamental requirement; nobody can survive without it. It is consumed at every level. The key is in the variations, the changes, and how you apply that and at what level. If you present your products at the correct time, position, place, promotion and with the correct pricing, you can achieve your needs.

Interviewed by,

Rasika Seneviratne

General Manager - DIMO PLC

3rd Vice President - Sri Lanka Food Processors Association

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Are you ready *for the* BATTLE?

SLFPA MEMBER'S PREMIER LEAGUE

10th ANNUAL SIX-A-SIDE Softball Cricket Encounter

14th February 2026

Thurstan College Sports Complex, Colombo 07

9th Annual Six-A-Side Tournament Winners – C. D. De Fonseka & Sons

We are pleased to announce that the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA) Annual Cricket Carnival will be held on Saturday, 14th February 2026, at the Thurstan College Sports Complex, Colombo 07.

Over the years, this event has become one of the most anticipated and memorable occasions on the SLFPA calendar, bringing together members, colleagues, and families for a day filled with camaraderie and sporting spirit.

Participating organizations will have the opportunity to gain valuable visibility and exposure, while also showcasing their commitment to the community and supporting the cricket-loving fraternity within the industry.

We are confident that this year's Cricket Carnival will once again be a fantastic event, filled with excitement, friendly competition, and true sportsmanship. The day will also feature a variety of entertainment activities, including singing and dancing competitions, ensuring fun and enjoyment for everyone in attendance.

Best Singer Competition

Karaoke Competition

Best Dancer Competition

Best Decorated Tent Competition

SRI LANKA FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION

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SLFPA Taste of Excellence

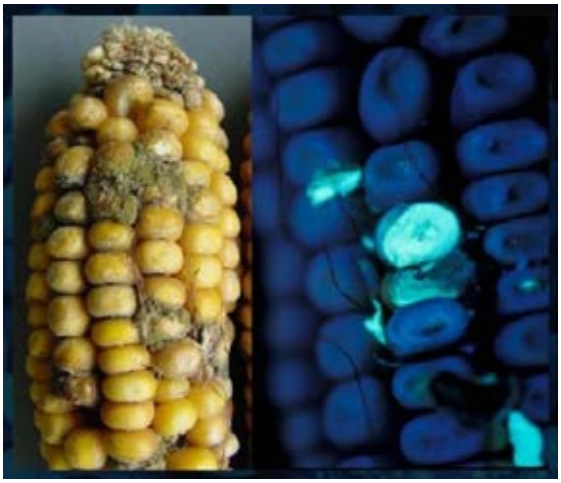
Advertisement

The Hidden Danger of Aflatoxins in Infant Foods

Every parent dreams of giving their baby the very best start in life. Each spoonful of food is meant to nourish, protect, and help them grow. But what if, hidden in that trusted food, was a silent poison — completely invisible, tasteless, and deadly? Among the most dangerous of these hidden threats are aflatoxins, toxins that can harm infants long before the danger is even discovered.

What Are Aflatoxins?

Aflatoxins are naturally occurring mycotoxins produced by certain molds, primarily Aspergillus flavus and Aspergillus parasiticus. These molds thrive in warm, humid conditions and contaminate crops such as maize, rice, groundnuts, and other staples commonly used in infant cereals and formula (Wild and Gong, 2010).

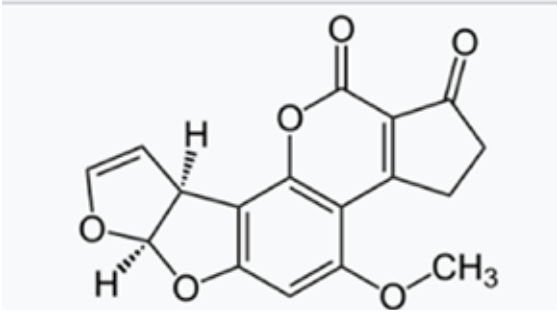


Blue Fluorescence of aflatoxin B1 in Maize Under UV Light

There are six major types of aflatoxins:

- B1 and B2 – named for the blue fluorescence they emit under ultraviolet (UV) light.
- G1 and G2 – named for their green fluorescence under UV light.
- M1 and M2 – secondary metabolites of B1 and B2 that appear in milk and dairy products when animals or humans consume contaminated food.

The B and G types are produced directly by molds, while M types enter the food chain through milk.



Chemical structure of (-) – aflatoxin B1

Among these, Aflatoxin B1 (AFB1) is the most toxic and carcinogenic, classified as a Group 1 carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC, 2012). It poses the highest risk to infants, making it the top priority for monitoring and control in infant foods.

Why Infants Are Especially Vulnerable?

Infants are far more sensitive to aflatoxins than adults. This heightened risk comes from both their fragile biology and their critical stage of development.

1. Underdeveloped detoxification system

The liver - the body's primary detoxification organ - is still immature in infants. This makes it less efficient at breaking down harmful substances, including aflatoxins, allowing the toxins to circulate longer and cause greater harm (Wild et al., 2015).

The detoxification process relies on specific liver enzymes, such as cytochrome P450 and glutathione S-transferases (GSTs).

- In infants, these enzymes are underdeveloped and less active, meaning they cannot efficiently break down aflatoxins.
- As a result, toxic metabolites like aflatoxin B1-8,9-epoxide — a highly reactive compound that directly damages DNA and liver cells — accumulate more readily.
- Implication: Even tiny amounts of aflatoxin can overwhelm an infant's system, leading to rapid and severe toxicity, including liver failure and long-term health damage.

2. Low body weight, high exposure

Because infants are so small, even tiny amounts of aflatoxin result in a high dose per kilogram of body weight. A 10 µg exposure is 50 times more toxic to a 5 kg infant than to a 50 kg adult (Williams et al., 2004).

3. Disruption of growth and development

Aflatoxins block protein synthesis and interfere with nutrient absorption, leading to stunted growth, wasting, and impaired brain development — effects that are often irreversible (Gong et al., 2004).

4. Weakening the immune system

Chronic exposure suppresses immunity, leaving infants highly susceptible to infections like diarrhea, pneumonia, and sepsis — the leading causes of childhood mortality worldwide (Williams et al., 2004).

5. Long-term cancer risk

Early-life exposure to AFB1 causes permanent DNA damage, dramatically increasing the risk of liver cancer later in life, especially in areas with high rates of hepatitis B virus (Liu & Wu, 2010).

Global Threat, Local Impact

Aflatoxin contamination is a worldwide issue, especially in regions where crops are stored in warm, humid conditions, handling practices are poor, and diets rely heavily on maize, rice, and groundnuts.

In parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, infants are unknowingly exposed daily, as aflatoxins are invisible and tasteless, making contamination hard to detect.

Safety Standards: Global vs. EU

The Codex Alimentarius sets global maximum limits for total aflatoxins in infant foods:

- General infant foods: 5 µg/kg
- Food aid products: 10 µg/kg

However, it does not set a specific maximum limit for the highly toxic Aflatoxin B1 (AFB1).

The European Union takes a much stricter stance:

- AFB1: 0.10 µg/kg
- Total aflatoxins: 0.50 µg/kg

This makes the EU 50 times stricter than Codex, offering greater protection for infants.

Why This Matters

Even tiny, repeated exposure during infancy can lead to:

- Stunted growth and impaired brain development,
- Weakened immunity, and
- Permanent DNA damage, raising lifelong cancer risks.

Once this damage occurs, it cannot be reversed, making prevention critical.

Protecting Our Babies

1. Stronger regulations – Adopt strict AFB1 limits like the EU and enforce testing.
2. Better crop handling – Dry grains properly and control moisture to prevent fungal growth.
3. Routine testing – Ensure infant foods are screened at every stage.
4. Parent education – Raise awareness so families can make safer choices.

Conclusion: Turning the Invisible Visible

Aflatoxins are silent, invisible killers hiding in the foods we trust the most. For infants, every contaminated spoonful can mean stunted growth, weakened immunity, or a lifetime of health struggles. Protecting our babies demands urgent action — stricter laws, safer food systems, and informed parents. When it comes to infant food safety, there is no room for compromise. Every child deserves a safe, healthy start in life — free from the deadly threat of aflatoxins.

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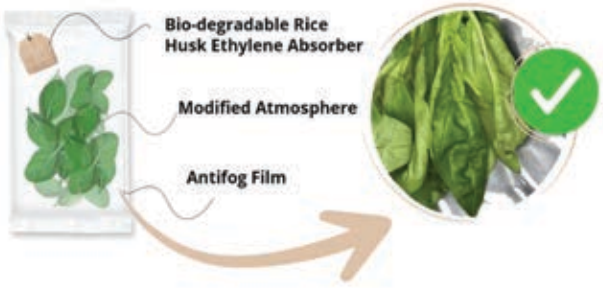
Supermarkets Can Finally Stop Tossing Basil!

The Secret to Longer-Lasting Freshness under non-favoring temperatures.

Fresh basil (*Ocimum basilicum L.*) is an Italian cuisine favorite, used in authentic pizzas, salads, pasta, soups and more. Also popular for its aromatic oils and health benefits. However, basil has one major flaw, it has a shelf life as short as your last grocery store trip. Typically lasting only three to four days in standard packaging, basil's rapid deterioration is not just due to poor handling but also its specific biological and environmental needs. To keep basil fresh, it requires storage temperatures between 12–15°C, which unfortunately doesn't align with standard supermarket conditions.



Many supermarkets store basil in cold cabinets set at 9°C, causing chilling injury.This leads to sad, wilted basil with blackened veins, tissue collapse, and worst of all its signature aroma gone.

To avoid this, some stores move basil to "fresh-keeping" zones at ambient temperatures around 20 ± 2°C, but this brings a new set of problems: rapid respiration, wilting, yellowing, and even an increase in bacterial growth. On top of all that, basil is highly sensitive to ethylene, a natural ripening hormone that speeds up aging and strips away its flavor.

But fear not, we came up with a solution! The goal was to create a packaging system that tackles respiration, moisture, and ethylene sensitivity all at once. The breakthrough? A combination of Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP), Antifog Polypropylene (AFPP) film, and bio-based ethylene absorbers, like rice husk biochar.

MAP works by adjusting the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels inside the package, slowing basil's respiration and delaying senescence. The AFPP film prevents condensation (no more soggy basil) while also keeping visibility clear for shoppers and reducing microbial growth. As if that wasn't enough, the rice husk biochar works as an ethylene absorber, slowing down the aging process and preserving basil's flavor and aroma.

When tested, this combo of AFPP + rice husk biochar outperformed conventional packaging, keeping basil fresher for longer. Basil stored at retail temperatures (20 ± 2°C) showed a dramatic improvement in freshness, losing only 0.14% of its weight, compared to 3.22% in traditional packaging. It also retained color much better, with a ΔE of 7.83 (signifying minimal color change), compared to 14.57 in the control group. Basil's antioxidant capacity was preserved too, with only 28% loss in phenolic compounds, a massive improvement over the 48% loss in the standard packaging.

But wait, there's more! this preservation system also drastically reduced microbial growth, ensuring basil stays safe and fresh for much longer.

This breakthrough could double the display life of fresh basil, meaning supermarkets can reduce food waste while giving customers basil that stays fresh, flavorful, and nutritious for longer. By controlling the environment inside the packaging, the AFPP + EA system preserves basil's color, aroma, and health benefits, taking fresh herb preservation to a whole new level.

And the best part? This solution isn't just for basil. It could revolutionize the shelf life of many other delicate herbs, keeping them fresh and flavorful, benefiting both consumers and retailers alike.

Harshanika Ranasinghe
Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka

Food Handler Training

Empowering Food Safety

Successful Completion of Food Handler Training Sessions in Kesbewa and Piliyandala.

In a decisive move to promote food safety and public health, the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health , Food Control Unit and the Kesbewa and Piliyandala MOH offices, has successfully conducted two impactful training sessions for food handlers in the Western Province. These sessions mark the initial phase of a planned island-wide project aimed at strengthening food safety standards across Sri Lanka.

The sessions formed a key component of the Food Handler Program, designed to elevate hygiene standards and empower small- and medium-scale food vendors, including street food operators and school canteen staff. This initiative aimed to foster a culture of smart food safety practices and accountability among food handlers, many of whom have historically lacked formal training and recognition.

Program Highlights

- Locations: Kesbewa and Piliyandala
- Participants: 100 food handlers and small business owners
- Focus Areas:
- Personal hygiene
- Cross-contamination prevention
- Allergen management
- Sanitation practices

The sessions were delivered using an MOH-endorsed training manual by expert resource persons, including volunteers and area medical officers. Participants received bilingual printed handbooks and were provided with refreshments throughout the program.

Impact and Outcomes

- Increased food safety awareness among local vendors
- Formal recognition and certification for participants
- Strengthened public confidence in street food and processed foods
- Established a foundation for a regional master trainer network

This initiative not only contributes to the reduction of foodborne illnesses but also enhances the status of food handlers, fostering greater trust in local food systems. As the launch phase of a nationwide endeavor, it sets the stage for expanding these critical training sessions to other regions.

Acknowledgments

SLFPA extends sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Health, the Food Control Unit, and the dedicated teams at the Kesbewa and Piliyandala MOH offices. Their unwavering support and collaboration were instrumental to the successful execution of this vital program.

Hemantha Balasuriya

Manager consumer and Regulatory Affairs- Coca cola

Secretary - Sri Lanka Food Processors Association

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Concludes Successfully

The 22nd edition of Profood Propack & Agbiz 2025, Sri Lanka's premier exhibition for the food, packaging, and agribusiness sectors, concluded successfully at the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Exhibition and Convention Centre, BMICH, Colombo, from August 22 to 24. Organized by the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA) in partnership with Lanka Exhibition and Conference Services (LECS), the event once again demonstrated its stature as the most influential gathering on Sri Lanka's food industry calendar.

Endorsed by the Ministry of Industries, the National Agribusiness Council (NAC), and the Institute of Food Science and Technology Sri Lanka (IFSTSL), the 2025 exhibition attracted an impressive 35,000+ visitors, underscoring its scale and growing relevance to the national economy. The opening ceremony was graced by Deputy Minister of Industries and Entrepreneurship Development, Hon. Chathuranga Abeysinghe, who reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening Sri Lanka's processed food, packaging, and agribusiness sectors.

Recognized as a key knowledge hub for processed food, beverages, packaging, and agriculture, Profood Propack & Agbiz continues to provide a vital platform for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to showcase their innovations, gain market visibility, establish partnerships, and explore export opportunities. Over its 25-year history, the exhibition has evolved into SLFPA's flagship event—serving as a catalyst for industry advancement, innovation, and collaboration across the food value chain.

Expanding Knowledge and Innovation

A highlight of the 2025 edition was the expanded Knowledge Hub, first introduced in 2024. This year's enhanced version featured a well-structured Industry Help Desk aimed at guiding entrepreneurs, startups, and trade visitors. The initiative offers advisory support, mentorship, and insights into emerging market opportunities, reinforcing the exhibition's role as a center for education and capacity building.
Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe, President of SLFPA, stated, "We are excited to present innovative food processing solutions, with the most outstanding entries receiving recognition and support for commercialization. The Industry Help Desk within the Knowledge Hub serves as a vital resource for new entrepreneurs seeking expert guidance and direction."

Mr. Aruna Senanayake, Co-Chairman of the Profood Propack Organising Committee 2025, emphasized the event's role as a launchpad for innovation and trade. "For more than two decades, Profood Propack & Agbiz has brought together entrepreneurs, innovators, and investors under one roof. The 2025 edition continues this legacy by creating new pathways for trade, introducing fresh product categories, and showcasing world-class technologies that are shaping the future of food processing, packaging, and agribusiness," he said.

Reinforcing this vision, Mr. Vasantha Chandrapala, Co-Chairman of the Organising Committee, highlighted the diversity of Sri Lanka's food sector. "From small family-owned enterprises rooted in tradition to large-scale processors driving efficiency, this platform celebrates that diversity. It enables collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and investment that elevate the entire industry," he remarked.

International Participation and Engagement

The exhibition brought together leading local and international stakeholders, with exhibitors and delegations from China, Germany, India, Japan, and South Korea, strengthening its global presence. The event featured product launches, design showcases, live demonstrations, seminars, and networking sessions that encouraged knowledge exchange and business partnerships. Visitors were particularly impressed by the enhanced exhibition design, greater interactivity, and opportunities to sample innovative new products. Many exhibitors expressed interest in reserving larger stalls and exploring sponsorships for future editions.

Driven by overwhelming participation and positive feedback, the organisers announced plans to expand the venue for the 2026 edition, creating even greater opportunities for exhibitors and visitors. With record footfall, strong business outcomes, and enthusiastic industry response, Profood Propack & Agbiz 2025 reaffirmed its position as the leading regional platform for the food, beverage, and packaging industries.

Strong Industry Backing through Sponsorship

The success of Profood Propack & Agbiz 2025 was made possible through the generous support of its sponsors, reflecting the collective strength and collaboration within Sri Lanka's food and manufacturing sectors. Platinum Sponsors included Maliban Biscuit Manufactories (Pvt) Ltd, Cargills Ceylon PLC, and Pakona Engineers (India) Pvt. Ltd. The Gold Sponsors were Aussee Oats Milling (Pvt) Ltd, Diamond Best Food (Pvt) Ltd, and MULTIVAC LARON India (Pvt) Ltd, while Silver Sponsors comprised Goma Engineering (Pvt) Ltd, FPT Food Process Technology Co. Ltd, CMC Engineering Export GmbH, CBL Convenience Foods Lanka PLC, Country Style Foods (Pvt) Ltd, Rancrisp Marketing (Pvt) Ltd, Nelna Farm (Pvt) Ltd, Alli Company (Pvt) Ltd, Maliban Milk Products (Pvt) Ltd, Maliban Dairy & Agri Products (Pvt) Ltd, Freelan Enterprises, FMJ Plastics (Pvt) Ltd, Akhtari Trades (Pvt) Ltd, Nikini Automation (Pvt) Ltd, and Diana Trading Co. (Pvt) Ltd. Their strong backing underscored the shared commitment to industry excellence, innovation, and collaboration.

Concluding with record attendance, exceptional participation, and strong business outcomes, Profood Propack & Agbiz 2025 once again proved to be the driving force behind Sri Lanka's food industry transformation. By promoting innovation, sustainability, and entrepreneurship through initiatives such as the Knowledge Hub and SME empowerment programs, the exhibition continues to pave the way for a more competitive, resilient, and globally connected future for the nation's food sector.

Aruna Senanayake

Assistant General Manager – C. W. Mackie PLC
Co-project chair-Pro Food Pro Pack Ag-biz & Knowledge hub 2025
President Elect. Sri Lanka Food Processors Association

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The Global Gateway invites Food Processors to scale up Circular Economy in Sri Lanka at SLFPA AGM

Camelia Adriana Bucatariu
Project manager of the Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR) Project, Sri Lanka (2024-2027)

At the 28th Annual General Meeting of the Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA), keynote speaker Ms. Camelia Adriana Bucatariu, Project Manager of the Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR) Project, Sri Lanka (2024–2027), representing the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, delivered an insightful presentation on the future of sustainable food systems in Sri Lanka.

The presentation, titled "Circular Economy in the Food Sector with Special Emphasis on Processing Opportunities," focused on the urgent need to tackle food loss, food waste, and plastic packaging waste through integrated social and technological solutions, including alternatives to plastics.

According to FAO/IWMI (2023) data, food waste generated in Sri Lanka's urban areas accounts for nearly 56.6% of total municipal solid waste, amounting to approximately 3,963 tons per day. Quantitative food losses in value chains, such as fruits and vegetables, can reach up to 40% while quality losses for fisheries can exceed 60%. Ms. Bucatariu stressed that food and plastic waste are deeply interconnected throughout the supply chain, from production to consumption and disposal.

The data is clear. Three priority areas can be identified for Sri Lanka's food sector:

1. Integration of Food Waste and Plastic Waste Strategies – by adopting a unified approach to monitor and reduce waste streams from food production up to households.
2. Scaling Up Alternatives to Single-Use Plastics – particularly in the packaging of perishable foods, ready to scale. For example, for hotels, restaurants, catering, and end consumers.
3. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration – with targeted support for SMEs to adopt, scale, and accelerate circular practices.

Ms. Bucatariu highlighted that applying circular economy principles across the agri-food value chain can help retain resource value for longer, minimize losses, and improve efficiency, ultimately driving a sustainable bioeconomy. She concluded with a strong call to action: "A systemic approach will accelerate progress on climate action, food security, and waste management goals. Unlocking Sri Lanka's circular potential requires cooperation across government, industry, and communities. The Global Gateway invites Food Processors to scale up Circular Economy. Contact us!"

The Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR) Project is funded by the European Union Global Gateway Strategy. Running from 2024 to 2027, the project aims to strengthen Sri Lanka's transition toward resource-efficient food systems. CIRCULAR supports business development for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises across Sri Lanka. To align with the project's geographic focus, for FAO, at least one company or consortium member submitting an Expression of Interest (EoI) should be based in one of the three target districts (Colombo, Galle, or Nuwara Eliya).
HYPERLINK: https://forms.office.com/e/4RG2BB4KRS"

Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA)

Held on 28th Annual General Meeting

The Sri Lanka Food Processors Association (SLFPA) successfully held its 28th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on September 24, 2025, at The Kingsbury Hotel, Colombo, with the participation of its members and industry stakeholders.

Established in 1997 as an advocacy group, SLFPA today represents over 162 member companies, ranging from large multinationals to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), all dedicated to advancing Sri Lanka's food and beverage processing industry.

The keynote address was delivered by Ms. Camelia Andria Bucatariu, Project Manager of the Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR) Project, Sri Lanka (2024–2027), representing the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

In her presentation, Ms. Bucatariu emphasized the urgent need to address food loss, food waste, and plastic packaging waste in Sri Lanka, highlighting that urban food waste alone accounts for nearly 56.6% of municipal solid waste, or about 3,963

tons per day (FAO/IWMI, 2023). She pointed out the interlinkages between food waste and plastic waste across the supply chain and stressed the importance of scaling alternatives to single-use plastics, particularly in food packaging.

She further underlined that applying circular economy practices across the agri-food value chain can reduce losses, improve resource efficiency, and create new opportunities for SMEs. Her key message was that integrating food waste and plastic waste strategies under a circular economy framework—through strong multi-stakeholder collaboration—can accelerate progress on climate action, food security, and sustainable economic growth in Sri Lanka.

Outgoing President Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe reflected on the association's journey, recognizing the contributions of the 14 past presidents who have shaped SLFPA's growth. He also emphasized the success of the Pro Food/Pro Pack 2025 Exhibition and the Annual Cricket Carnival. In a key announcement, he revealed SLFPA's plans to begin construction of a dedicated Secretariat and facility at Gothami Road, Borella—marking a significant milestone in the association's long-term strategy.

At the AGM, the new Executive Committee for 2026/2027 was appointed, comprising Mr. Aruna Senanayake of C W Mackie PLC as President, Mr. Deepal De Alwis of Neochem International (Pvt) Ltd. as Secretary, and Mr. Sanjeewa De Silva of Unilever Sri Lanka Ltd. as Treasurer. The committee also includes Mr. Thusith Wijesinghe of Trans Continental Packaging Commodities (Pvt) Ltd. as Immediate Past President, Mr. Nadishan Guruge of Mead Lee Trading Co. (Pvt) Ltd. as President Elect, Mr. Vasantha Chandrapala of Visvaka Marketing (Pvt) Ltd. as 1st Vice President, Mr. Damitha Perera of Forbes & Walker Commodity Brokers (Pvt) Ltd. as 2nd Vice President, and Mr. Rasika Seneviratne of Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC as 3rd Vice President. Supporting roles are held by Mr. Dineth Alahakoon of Country Style Food (Pvt) Ltd. as Assistant Secretary and Mr. Sameera Jayathilaka of Westmann Engineering (Pvt) Ltd. as Assistant Treasurer.

In addition to the above office bearers, the following ten Executive Committee members were appointed: Mr. Nirosh Lalantha of Ceylon Cold Stores PLC, Mr. Niroshan Dalpethado of C D De Fonseka & Sons, Mr. Sheran De Alwis of MA's Tropical Food Processing (Pvt) Ltd., Mr. Sanjeewa Niroshan of SGS Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., Mr. Amila Weerasinghe of Nestlé Lanka Ltd., Mr. Thusitha Ekanayake of Anods Cocoa (Pvt) Ltd., Ms. Praharshi Wickramasekara of International Commodity Traders (Pvt) Ltd., Mr. Vijitha Govinna of Ceylon Biscuits Ltd., Mr. Rangajeewa Hettiarachchi of Fonterra Brands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd., and Mr. Kushan Amarasinghe of Finagle Lanka (Pvt) Ltd.

SGS Lanka (Pvt) Ltd,Unilever Sri Lanka Ltd. and Hayleys Aventura (Pvt) Ltd partnered as Gold Sponsors of the AGM, while Lanka Exhibition & Conference Services (LECS) supported the event as the Bronze Sponsor.

The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by the Secretary, Mr. Hemantha Balasuriya, followed by cocktails and a fellowship networking session, providing an opportunity for members to connect and strengthen industry ties.

Advertisement

New Food Labelling and Advertising Regulations 2022

Updated regulatory system is obviously very important factor for any country not only to protect consumers but also to support local industry to compete with global regulatory requirement.

After many years of discussion Food (Labelling and Advertising) Regulations 2022. After several years of collaborative effort, we are now in a position to fully implement the regulation from early in next year. It is important to note that the advertising-related provisions (Regulations 2 to 13(15) and Regulation 15, along with Sections I to IX) have already been in effect since 1st July 2025.

By considering the impact to industry much effort has been taken by the various industry associations including Sri Lanka Food Processors Association to assist in compiling and presenting industry concerns—particularly those of small and medium-scale enterprises. We need to admire the support and flexibility shown by the Ministry of health and Food Advisory Committee including the Chief food authority (Director General of Health service). Nevertheless, needs to admire extended support from Ministry of Industries to convey the practical difficulties and concerns with the health ministry.

The current Food (Labelling and Advertising) Regulation, introduced in 2005, has served its purpose for many years by providing basic information to consumers. However, with advancements in technology and new innovations, it has become essential to update and replace it with a modern regulation that better addresses today's needs.

When we compare the new regulation with the 2005 regulation, the most significant changes include making the Nutrition Information Table mandatory and introducing stringent restrictions on marketing food products to vulnerable groups, such as children

If we try to summaries three major focus areas out of many would be

1. Enhance Consumer Information: By making nutrition labelling mandatory for pre-packaged foods and requiring the common name in multiple languages effort taken to ensure accessibility for all consumers and there by consumers can make more informed choices.
2. Increase Transparency: By mandating clearer details for imported/repackaged foods and improved ingredient/allergen lists. Trying to introduce clear guidelines on nutrient levels and claims possible
3. Protect Vulnerable Groups: By introducing strict restrictions on food and beverage advertising aimed at children under the age of 12. This can be considered as landmark public health measure to curb the marketing of food (especially with flavour enhancers, high in fat, salt, or sugar) to children.

While the food industry fully supports the objectives of the new regulation, some practical challenges have emerged during implementation. For example, the requirement to include extensive mandatory nutrition information within limited packaging space has raised concerns. The Ministry of Health has acknowledged these challenges and agreed to consider amendments to address space limitations. Similarly, discussions are ongoing regarding certain clauses, such as the restriction on mascots, which the industry views as critical for brand identity built over many years. We appreciate the constructive dialogue and expect practical refinements to the recently published Food Labelling and Advertising Regulation in the near future.

If anyone want to download the latest Food regulations and the amendments please visit the Food control and administration website (https://eohfs.health.gov.lk/food/index.php) or enquire directly from the food control unit or even you can get the support of our Sri Lanka Food Processors Association Secretariat.
(Web https://slfpa.org/ , email : info@slfpa.org)

Rasika Seneviratne
General Manager - DIMO PLC
3rd Vice President - Sri Lanka Food Processors Association

Understanding GMOs

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) represent a significant advancement in biotechnology, reshaping agriculture, food production, and even medicine. A GMO is an organism whose genetic material has been altered through genetic engineering to exhibit specific traits, such as resistance to pests or enhanced nutritional value. While GMOs offer promising solutions to global challenges like food security, they also spark debates over safety, environmental impact, and ethical concerns. This article explores the science behind GMOs, their applications, benefits, controversies, and regulatory oversight.

THE SCIENCE OF GMOs

Genetic modification involves altering an organism's DNA using techniques like gene splicing, CRISPR, or recombinant DNA technology. Unlike traditional breeding, which combines traits from related species over generations, genetic engineering allows precise insertion, deletion, or modification of specific genes. For example, a gene from the bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) can be inserted into corn to produce a protein toxic to pests, creating Bt corn.

The process typically involves: Identifying the Trait: Scientists select a desirable trait, such as drought tolerance or increased vitamin content. Isolating the Gene: The specific gene responsible for the trait is identified and isolated, often from another organism. Inserting the Gene: The gene is inserted into the target organism's DNA using tools like gene guns or bacterial vectors. Testing and Cultivation: The modified organism is tested for stability and safety before being grown or commercialized. This precision allows for outcomes unachievable through conventional breeding, such as rice engineered to produce beta-carotene (Golden Rice) to combat vitamin A deficiency.

APPLICATIONS OF GMOs

GMOs are primarily used in agriculture but have applications in other fields as well.

AGRICULTURE: About 90% of U.S. corn, soybeans, and cotton are genetically modified, according to 2023 USDA data. Common traits include: Pest Resistance: Bt crops reduce pesticide use by producing their own insecticide. Herbicide Tolerance: Crops like Roundup Ready soybeans withstand herbicides, simplifying weed control. Environmental Resilience: Drought-tolerant or

salt-resistant crops help farmers in challenging climates. [Examples: Bt corn, Roundup Ready soybeans, and Golden Rice are widely adopted. Papayas engineered to resist ringspot virus saved Hawaii's papaya industry in the 1990s.]

MEDICINE: Insulin Production: Genetically modified bacteria produce human insulin for diabetes treatment, a practice pioneered in the 1980s.Vaccines and Therapies: GMOs are used to develop vaccines and gene therapies, such as those for cancer or rare genetic disorders.

OTHER USES: Environmental Applications: Genetically modified microorganisms can break down pollutants, aiding in bioremediation. Animal Biotechnology: The AquAdvantage salmon, engineered for faster growth, is one of the few GMO animals approved for consumption.

BENEFITS OF GMOs

GMOs offer several advantages: Increased Crop Yields: Studies, such as those by the National Academy of Sciences (2016), show GMO crops can increase yields by 20-30% in some cases, supporting food security. Reduced Pesticide Use: Bt crops have reduced insecticide applications by up to 50% globally, per a 2014 meta-analysis. Improved Nutrition: Golden Rice addresses vitamin A deficiency, which affects millions in developing countries. Economic Benefits: Farmers benefit from lower input costs and higher yields, with global economic gains estimated at $225 billion from 1996-2020 (ISAAA data). Climate Resilience: Drought-tolerant crops help farmers adapt to climate change.

CONTROVERSIES AND CONCERNS

Despite their benefits, GMOs face significant opposition: Health Concerns: Critics argue GMOs may cause allergies or long-term health issues, though major studies (e.g., by the National Academy of Sciences, 2016) find no evidence that GMOs are less safe than conventional foods. Environmental Impact: Concerns include crossbreeding with wild species, creating "super weeds," or harming non-target organisms like pollinators. A 2019 study suggested minimal ecological harm from GMO crops, but long-term effects remain under study. Corporate Control: Companies like Monsanto dominate the GMO seed market, raising concerns about farmer dependency and seed patenting. Ethical Issues: Some oppose GMOs on moral grounds, viewing genetic modification as unnatural or risky.

Public perception varies widely. A 2021 Pew Research survey found 49% of Americans believe GMOs are safe, while 44% are skeptical, reflecting polarized views.

REGULATION AND SAFETY

In the U.S., GMOs are regulated by: FDA: Ensures GMO foods are safe for consumption. USDA: Oversees GMO crop cultivation and environmental impact. EPA: Regulates crops producing pesticides, like Bt crops.

Globally, regulations differ. The EU has stricter GMO laws, requiring extensive labeling and approval processes, while countries like Brazil and India embrace GMOs with varying oversight. Over 2,000 studies, including those by the World Health Organization, confirm approved GMOs are safe, but ongoing testing is mandated.

THE FUTURE OF GMOs

Advancements in gene-editing technologies like CRISPR promise more precise modifications, potentially reducing controversies. Future applications may include: Crops with enhanced carbon sequestration to combat climate change; Biofortified foods addressing multiple nutrient deficiencies; GMOs for sustainable aquaculture or lab-grown meat.

Public acceptance will depend on transparent communication, robust regulation, and addressing ethical concerns.

CONCLUSION

GMOs are a powerful tool for addressing global challenges, from hunger to environmental stress, but they come with complex trade-offs. Their benefits—higher yields, reduced pesticide use, and improved nutrition—are backed by decades of data, yet concerns about safety, ecology, and corporate control persist. As biotechnology evolves, balancing innovation with public trust will be critical. Understanding the science and engaging in informed dialogue can help society navigate the future of GMOs responsibly.

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SLFPA's Dreams to Becomes Reality

Proposed building 3D View

Being an association, SLFPA [Sri Lanka Food Processors' Association] delivers its dedicated and valuable services to the food processing and packaging industry for last 28 years with the intention of grooming it is members to the next level inculcating new technologies, practices, and giving helping hand to follow Sri Lankan and international product quality standards. Moreover, SLFPA contributes to the industry establishing standards cooperating with certified bodies and actively involving with the government and related authorities when setting up new rules, regulations, and acts.

Being realized and observed the pivotal role played by the SLFPA, its EXCO foresaw the need of having its own venue to serve and continue its valuable services in a more productive and efficient manner. The final outcome of this thought came up with desired SLFPA own dream office complex as pictured in the background amidst of numerous difficulties. This is certainly helpful and facilitate the SLFPA and its sister associations in terms of upgrading its service standards while minimizing its operational overhead cost. Conceptually, our committee has focused to entrench the facility featured with spacious and ergonomic workspaces consisted with auditorium, conference rooms, etc. cutting technology and modern amenities in terms of communication techniques and devices, engineering techniques, green energy concepts and so on while make utilizing the maximum advantage of the strategic location of the selected venue.

Even though the desired project is still in the initial stage, EXCO of the SLFPA is planning to fulfill the desired goal within a précised time frame with the assistance of corporative support from NGOs, donor agencies, and relevant authorities. At last, EXCO of the SLFPA prefers to keep you updated on the progress and look forward to welcoming your innovative and conceptual thoughts that would be attributed to the new complex.

Sameera Jayathilake
Assistant General Manager - Westman Engineering,
Sri Lanka Food Processors Association,
Building Project & Exco Committee member

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- Data management & reporting

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When you need to be sure