RSPO approves revised principles and criteria

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) approved a revised set of principles and criteria (P&C) at the Extraordinary General Assembly of RSPO members in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia earlier this year in April.

The P&C review process began in November 2011. Highlight of the revised P&C include:
- A new criterion requiring growers to minimise greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from new plantings.
- A new criterion on ethical business practices, which requires companies to have and implement policies on countering corruption.
- A new criterion requiring that a policy on human rights is in place and communicated to the whole company.
- A new criterion banning the use of forced labour.

While an outright ban on pesticides was discussed during the review, a middle ground was reached whereby their use is permitted only under exceptional circumstances (as determined by national interpretation), when no alternatives are available.

Emphasis on safety standards in Tanzania

The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) has warned that sunflowerseed oil suppliers and producers must adhere to safety standards to ensure their products are safe for human consumption, reports Tanzania Daily News.

"Adhering to TBS standards is not just an option," said TBS corporate and public affairs officer Rholda Andamalile, who told the Daily News that there were increasing concerns over the safety and quality of edible oil in the wake of a booming sunflower seed industry.

"There is modern equipment for testing the quality of edible oil and giving them standard marks before they are introduced into the market," she said in an interview.

According to the Daily News report, national demand for edible oil in Tanzania is over 220,000 tonnes/year. Sunflower is grown mostly in the Dodoma and Singida regions, with about half of farmers engaged in sunflower production.

PerkinElmer in Israel

PerkinElmer Inc, USA has set up direct operations in Israel, headquartered near Tel Aviv.

The company provides analytical instrumentation, software application, screening and testing services to the chemical, consumer products manufacturing, energy, food, beverage and nutraceuticals; forensic; healthcare and life sciences industries.

PerkinElmer said with its new office, it would be able to support Israel's growing demand for laboratory asset management, quality assurance and quality control, as well as instrument service and maintenance.

Detecting olive oil fraud

The adulteration and mislabelling of olive oil products and the substitution of other oils to increase profits has become a major concern in recent years, especially in Italy and Spain, SGS wrote in its June “Olive Oil Market Review”.

“In 2008, two investigations in Italy uncovered a large-scale scheme to re-label oils from other Mediterranean countries as Italian,” the review said. The investigations also discovered systematic adulteration of olive oil with sunflower and soybean oils, destined to be sold as extra virgin olive oil.

“In 2012, Operation Lucerna in Spain identified fraudulent activity in which blends of cheaper oils, such as palm and sunflower oil, were passed off as olive oil. According to the Olive Oil Times (14 February 2013), the scheme ‘allegedly involved a complex network of 30 companies from Spain, Italy and Portugal and sales tax evasion of at least €3M’.

Regulated by the International Olive Council (IOC), olive oil must conform to defined quality standards and is subject to the same safety and quality regulations as other food products. The IOC has three different grades of olive oil:

- Extra virgin olive oil - virgin olive oil that has a free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of not more than 0.8g per 100g.
- Virgin olive oil - virgin olive oil that has a free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of not more than 2g per 100g.
- Ordinary virgin olive oil - virgin olive oil that has free acidity, expressed as oleic acid, of not more than 3.3g per 100g.

If olive oil contains more than 3.3g of oleic acid per 100g, the IOC deems it as "not fit for consumption".

VGin" oil means that the olives have been pressed to extract the oil and no heat or chemicals have been used during the extraction process.

SGS said that in 2013, many olive oils sold as "extra virgin" were not meeting the rigid standards set forth by the IOC and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), which uses a different system to categorize olive oils.

"To identify this type of adulteration, testing parameters in COI/715/NC no. 3 – point 3 "Purity Criteria' have been selected to enable the detection of contamination or fraud in the different grades of olive oil," SGS wrote. For example:
- High values of stigmastadienes in an extra virgin olive oil indicates contamination with a refined oil (olive oil, seed oil or kernel oil) or an inappropriate method of extraction for extra virgin olive oil.
- High values of wax, erythrodiol and uvaol indicate that the olive oil has been mixed with a kernel oil.
- High values of ECN42 and sterol composition indicate that the olive oil has been mixed with a seed oil.
- Methyl and ethyl esters determination has been included to detect deodorised oil in extra virgin olive oil.
- 2-monoacipalmitate glycerol determination is used for the detection of animal fats and more.

SGS said that its laboratories in Spain and Tunisia could make all these analyses and manage the quality control of large quantities of olive oil supply for clients.

SGS offers inspection, verification, testing and certification services worldwide.

SGS reported revenue growth of 7.2% to CHF2.9bn (US$3.3bn) in its half year results announced on 17 July.

"This top-line increase reflects an organic revenue growth of 5% for the period as well as 2.2% in additional revenues from 25 recently acquired companies," the group said.

"In response to deteriorating market conditions, additional restructuring activities have been carried out resulting in one-off expenses of CHF12m (US$13m). Net profit for the period, including restructuring costs, reached CHF265m (US$285m), 10% ahead of the prior year."

The group confirmed solid top line growth and improved operating results for the full year.