

Tiger Brands launches *The State of Nutrition in South Africa* report //

Tiger Brands launches research report about the state of nutrition in South Africa to highlight challenges and solutions towards improved national health and wellbeing.

Johannesburg, 03 December 2020: This year has highlighted the importance of a healthy immune system, body and mind – and the role that food and our lifestyles play in all of this. As Africa’s largest food manufacturer, Tiger Brands’ core purpose is to nourish and nurture more lives every day. As part of the Eat Well Live Well initiative, the food company conducted extensive independent research to better understand the best way to go about this. The resulting *State of Nutrition in South Africa* report was presented to the media and industry stakeholders at Langhams Lifestyle Centre.

The report provides a cross section of South Africa’s health, wellness and wellbeing as a nation. It highlights what we are getting right in terms of our nutrition, and the aspects we should focus our attention on, so as to live long and full lives. The report also makes professional-endorsed suggestions about how to address our national nutrition challenges in a way that is affordable and accessible to the average South African, in light of national, and indeed global, food security challenges.

“We sincerely hope that this report will become a mainstay in public clinics, private hospitals, doctor’s rooms and school libraries. Our aim is for this report to help educate South Africans about the importance of healthy diets and balanced lifestyles,”
Becky Opdyke, Chief Marketing Officer at Tiger Brands, told media at the report launch.

In a developing country such as South Africa, how and what we eat is often shaped by various socioeconomic predictors. Like much of the rest of the world, we are undergoing a nutrition transition. The average South African has a higher Body Mass Index (BMI) than the global recommendation. This makes us more likely to develop a range of medical conditions related to obesity, which carry the risk of toppling our already over-burdened public healthcare sector – at a time when we can least afford the resources and man power.

The report also found that close to a fifth of South Africans have insufficient access to comprehensive and easy-to-understand nutrition education. Similarly, only 56% of consumers read food nutrition labels when considering their food choices. And often times, South Africans sacrifice the nutritional value of food in favour of taste and value for money. Our busy lifestyles also often see us prioritise ready-made meals and eat heavily processed foods and ingredients as the main component of most meals, instead of cooking from scratch and using fresh ingredients.

The report, however, predicts the gradual global shift towards planetary diets that prioritise a variety of plant-based foods and low amounts of animal-based foods, refined grains, added sugars and unhealthy fats, which are not just good for the planet, but are better for humans too.

The findings suggests a number of solutions that are culturally appropriate and socioeconomically sensitive to help South Africans improve their national nutrition profiles.

“There are a number of ways to tackle these from formal and accessible science-based nutrition education at school and community level to simple and accurate food nutrition labels. Consumers also need to be better educated on the reading of food nutrition labels,” said Opdyke.

Other recommendations that arose from a panel discussion between Tiger Brands and attendees included the establishment of community vegetables gardens, a secondary food market for ‘ugly produce’, and ongoing partnerships between the food industry and food collection charities to help redistribute food to the most vulnerable. Similarly, incentivising healthy and wholesome foods, across a variety of food groups, will go a long way to help promote healthier diets.

“*The State of nutrition in South Africa* report does not aim to merely highlight South Africa’s dietary shortcomings. Instead, it aims to make practical suggestions, that are endorsed by professionals, about how to address these challenges in an affordable, accessible and sustainable manner. Because when we eat well, we live well,” concluded Opdyke.

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