


SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR
FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
**CONGRESS
2021**

Welcome to SAAFoST's
24th Biennial International
Virtual Congress

20 - 22 September 2021



Have Cows had it Right All Along? – Are Plant-Based Diets the Way of the Future or will Dairy Remain Part of a Balanced Diet

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Abstract

In a world where the only constant is change, one of the biggest challenges facing the food industry is to remain relevant in a highly dynamic consumer landscape. The challenge to remain relevant is particularly daunting for the dairy industry where the ever-increasing focus on health, well-being, food security and nutrition, have led many consumers to question the role of dairy in their diet and to shift their focus to plant-based alternatives. However, is this shift driven by scientific facts or misconceptions derived from misinformation? Has confirmation bias prevented consumers from being objective? Are plant-based proteins truly more environmentally friendly and sustainable than their dairy counterparts? Are plant-based proteins a viable alternative to feed the ever-increasing global population? Whether driven by fact for fiction, one thing is clear, plant-based alternatives have altered the consumer landscape irreversibly. What remains unclear is what to extent the landscape has been altered and what this ultimately means for the future of the dairy industry; should dairy companies be shifting their focus along with those of the consumer or shifting the consumer's focus to the benefits of dairy. Perhaps the key to unlocking innovation in this landscape is balance over preference.

Biography: Nikki Hogan

Nikki Hogan has been the R&D Manager at African Food Industries since the beginning of 2018 where she heads up their dairy and beverage division. Her active interest in dairy has been cultivated since she started working in the dairy industry in 2015. Nikki's passion for all things protein, led to her focusing on meat science in her postgraduate studies. She obtained her PhD in Food Science at Stellenbosch University. Her dissertation "Factors influencing colour variation and oxidative stability of South African game meat species," has led to the publication of several peer reviewed articles. Nikki currently resides in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town where she lives with her husband and three spoilt cats.