

EDITORIAL

Editorial

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As I set about writing this editorial, I have just returned from visiting IBA 2012 – the major baking exhibition held in Germany every 3 years. This year it was held in Munich and as always, I was impressed by the skills, ingenuity and scale of the baking and allied industries. Drawing in bakers, ingredients and equipment suppliers from around the world, it really is a celebration of the diversity of wheat and other grain-based products and their contribution to human nutrition and general well-being.

In most parts of the world and most consumers' minds, cereal and grain-based foods have a reputation for wholesomeness, nutritional value and sensory pleasure. Yes, cereal-based foods have their detractors, but as a whole the grain industries make a significant contribution to diet, health and even lifestyle. To meet the needs of health-conscious consumers, the grain-based industries continue to innovate and there is probably nothing better to visit than IBA to appreciate those innovations.

Never far from the eyes and ears at the exhibition were concerns over the safety of grain-based foods. In the context of food safety, the grain-based industries are seen in a positive light but they are never complacent, recognizing that they must be always vigilant to ensure that they maintain their strong reputation for the production of safe foods. Many of the major bakery product groups enjoy a relatively 'safe' status, in part because of the reduction of microbial loads during the baking process itself. However, the potential for post-baking contamination and being used in combination with other higher risk food components (such as creams and fillings) ensures that food safety risks are never far from a baker's mind.

If I had a criticism of the event it would be that, for obvious reasons, its focus remains firmly on the mature industrialized nations. It is true there were representatives from many nations, including those commonly described as 'emerging', but topics and displays related to food security and sustainability were hard to find. In some ways, you could argue that the event continues to highlight the gaps that exist between industries and consumer groups around the world.

It may be unfair, but as I viewed the undoubted skills of the artisan baker, I could not but think of those parts of the world where more basic grain-based foods play a role in simply sustaining life and technology are far from advanced and efficient. To balance this criticism, it would be fair to say that innovation in ingredients and production efficiency will ultimately benefit the manufacture of grain-based foods throughout the world. However, at such events we should not lose sight of the greater picture and continue to recognize that we all have a contribution which can be made to increasing food security – in the broadest sense of the term – around the globe.

The forthcoming MoniQA meeting in Budapest (26 February–1 March 2013 – see Calendar of Events) will be addressing some key topics related to food safety and food security in the context of the global pressures that come from climate change and the current economic crises. At times, in IBA 2012 there was such a buzz to the event that it was easy to forget the current environmental and economic challenges that food producers face. Perhaps the takeaway message was that while humankind are confronted with many difficult challenges in producing enough healthy and safe food, the resiliency and ingenuity of many individuals working together to tackle these challenges will deliver the solutions that we need.

Finally, I would like to say a big 'Thank you' to our contributors and reviewers. This is our fourth year of publication and with your help we have grown the journal in status and scientific quality. This includes an increase to 0.624 in our impact factor in 2011 with an IF ranking of 90 out of 128, considering our relatively junior status in the field of scientific journal publishing is a good start. I hope that QAS and the material that you have provided have contributed in some small way to providing the ideas that we need to the challenges that we face in the food industry.

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