

INTERNATIONAL PEST CONTROL

September/October 2009
Volume 51 Number 5

ISSN 0020-8256 (Print)
ISSN 1751-6919 (Online)

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South Africa – An emerging and professional pest control market

Rob Fryatt

Think back to the number of newspaper and magazine articles and all television programmes on China in the lead into the Beijing Olympics? How much more did we all learn about China in the preceding year? By the end of 2010 we will all probably know a lot more about South Africa too as the eyes of the world focus there in June and July 2010 for the FIFA World Cup.

Did you know that South Africa has 11 official national languages spread through its population of 40 millions people and that business in the “Rainbow Nation” is widely conducted in both English and Afrikaans. Just two things I have personally learnt through my increasing travels to the country. Equally I have become aware that South Africa has without doubt, the most developed professional pest control industry in sub Saharan Africa, but it probably still feels a little isolated from the global industry. The country is not generally on the interconnecting trade routes of our industry in the same way as Asia, Europe and North America, but well worth the detour to learn more.

Despite this relative isolation, or maybe because of it, the South African industry has built itself into a unified and well trained industry. As Mark Enslin, current president of the South African Pest Control Association (SAPCA) commented during August in his welcoming address to the 8th

Martina Flynn President of BPCA presenting to the conference



PestBiz event in Cape Town “*The industry association having been in existence for 45 years pre dates television in South Africa*”. Indeed the SAPCA pre dates many pest control associations in markets considered much larger and developed.

According to Dave Alcock, who with his wife Sue, own and manage Alcock’s Entomological Services based in Durban there are 5,000 technicians working in the South African market in an industry worth an estimated 5000 million Rand. A market not quite as large as some the major European countries, but not too far behind and growing in line with the middle classes demands within the country, for a healthier and more hygienic environment. The market is one based on the usual spectrum of urban pests, along with an endemic malarial mosquito problems and a significant termite control market. There is no doubt that the historic geographic isolation has been a factor that has delayed the introduction of techniques common to the rest of the industry, such as termite baiting, but the focus of the industry is on the future with environmental issues to the fore in discussion, and awareness of international issues such as bed bugs growing daily.

The industry is increasingly looking to its colleagues at a global level to learn. Many of their industry leaders are attending conferences away from South Africa. Today at Pest World in the USA and the CEPA events such as Europepest in Europe South Africans are present learning and sharing with their industry peers.

The title of this years annual PestBiz event was “Pest Control in the 21st Century” . Papers featured such titles as Responsible and Ethical Pest Control- what society expects of the pest control industry and Sustainable Development – repositioning the PCO industry along with information on the European Biocidal Products Directive and how international regulations impacts on the local PCO Industry. New Chief Executive Officer of the SAPCA, Anzelle van Niekerk, commented on the continued need to build the skills of the industry. “Within South Africa”, she commented, “The PCSIB (Pest Control Service Industries Board) has been instrumental in developing the training program for the



pest management industry. This has included development of Unit Standards and Qualifications as required by the National Skills Development Strategy. This means that we believe we have some of the best trained technicians in the industry”.

The strong development of a unified industry over the last few years has been led by Lynette Cokayne, the chief of staff and her team, improving communication both within the membership and the industry worldwide.

During my increasingly regular visits to the industry and especially as a recent returning visitor to speak at the PestBiz event, it is clear to me that South Africa has the benefit of a strongly unified industry. One that is respected by government, as demonstrated by their presentations at the PestBiz. The industry is now looking for new and different products and technologies to augment the general availability of insecticides, rodenticides and termiticides. The market is there, the technicians are well trained, the industry is ready and already moving forward. Visitors to the World Cup can look forward to a great experience in a pest free environment.

Anzelle van Niekerk

