

## THE NEED FOR THE SPAZA SHOP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SSMS)



In South Africa, a growing number of foreign-owned spaza shops have been found selling expired or counterfeit food products made in unregulated home environments under the guise of well-known brands. **Despite their vital role in the informal economy, the majority of these businesses fail to meet health, safety, and licensing standards. Recent regulatory interventions revealed that only a small fraction of over 30,000 foreign-owned spaza shops were approved to operate, with 93% of the 800 closures involving non-compliance by foreign nationals.** This highlights a critical public health risk and the urgent need for stricter enforcement, food safety education, and equitable compliance support across the spaza sector.

In light of a heartbreaking incident that occurred in Soweto, South Africa, the community has raised serious concerns regarding the safety and regulation of products sold in foreign-operated spaza shops. The death of two children — Leon Jele and Neo Khang, both reportedly after consuming poisonous cookies purchased from a local spaza shop — has ignited anger, sorrow, and urgent calls for change.

## Soweto residents fed up with foreign-operated spaza shops following death of two children

Siyabonga Sithole | Published 1 year ago

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Leon Jele one of the kids that died after eating poisonous cookies bought from a spaza shop. Photo Supplied

One of the families suffered a double tragedy with two of their children having shared the alleged poisonous foodstuff resulting in the death of their 4-year-old Neo Khang, while his cousin, Katileho Mbatha (also 4), was still in hospital.

Their grandmother, Matota Khang, could not console herself as she told *The Star* of her agony trying to revive a growling Neo.







A foreign-owned spaza shop was caught purifying and selling water sourced from a toilet, endangering public health. The water was filtered using unsafe methods and sold as clean, causing outrage in the community.



**FAKE FOODS SOLD IN UNREGULATED SA SPAZA SHOPS POSE MASSIVE THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH**





In some townships the spaza shops owners was found selling expired food items that were dangerously repackaged to look like trusted, well-known brands. Investigations revealed that the shop owners had been producing snacks and drinks in unsanitary conditions within their home, then sealing them in counterfeit packaging designed to mimic original brands commonly sold in supermarkets

This deliberate deception not only violated health and safety regulations but also posed a serious risk to consumers, especially children, who could not tell the difference between the fake and real products



The SSMS project is a direct response to the community's pain and demand for justice. It is being designed with the hope that **no other child will suffer** due to unchecked spaza shop operations. These images of lost lives are not just memories — they are a **call to action**. Let this system be the legacy that brings change, safety, and dignity to township retail across South Africa.

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