Training programme for technicians and quality supervisors in mineral water bottling plants

The ‘HACCP system’ is the theme of the first training session organised by the Office of Thermalism on 11 and 12 April for technicians, stock managers and quality supervisors in mineral water bottling plants. The session, whose objective is quality control and improvement in water bottling plants, falls within the framework of a four-part training programme on quality issues.

Spring water evokes a natural spring whose temperature is few degrees higher that the average spring zone temperature and whose physico-chemical composition remains unchanged in spite of climate fluctuations. In this case, water temperature may vary between 25°C and over 45°C. On such basis, waterholes are classified as thermal (an ever-enriched list). It is here that the Office of Thermalism (under the direction of Mrs Mongia Mahjoubi) intervenes because it is responsible for supervision, quality control, training, project examination, studies and so on, with the defined aim to restructure the sector.

Spas: a quantum leap

In Tunisia, there are four entirely privatised spas (since 1995). The first is located in Korbous where design and equipment are being upgraded through a rehabilitation programme. Hammam Bourgiba spa is also closed for rehabilitation. The Jebel Ouest spa, under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Health, is reopening soon after an one-year closure for refurbishment and modernisation. The only operating spa is that of Djerba which has been in service since October 2000. This recent spa perfectly meets international standards and caters for the physically handicapped.

If the number of visitors has decreased as a result of the various undertaken renovations, it is expected to increase as from this year.

More than 20 million Tunisian dinars for Ain Oktor spa.

New projects are under way. The Ain Oktor spa will include a thalassotherapy and beauty care for the cost of more than 20 million Tunisian dinars. Other projects are being studied. Hammam-Zriba, which is already well reputed for its hot baths, will be turned into a spa. The Office of Thermalism has studied the possibility of developing Hammam Ben Jedidi (Hammamet) as a thermal ‘town’ that could be an addition to one of the most popular tourist destinations.
**Hot baths: 2.5 million visitors a year**

Tunisia has many hot baths scattered all over the country. The most famous ones are located in El Hamma of Gabes, Hammam Zriba, Hammam Bent Jedidi, Hammam Siala, Hammam Lif, Hammam Mellegue, Hammam Biadha, and El Hamma of Tozeur. All these places are reputed for their therapeutic hot water quality. In the year 2000, the number of hot bath visitors was 2.5 million, with 60% of visitors to El Hamma of Gabes alone.

However, most of the hot baths, which are managed by the regional councils or municipalities, deserve more efforts with regard to operation conditions. In this vein, the Office of Thermalism has issued a new specification for the operation of hot baths. Such specification will soon be discussed by the aforementioned institutions managing those baths with the set aim of improving, at least gradually, operation conditions in light of the observed shortcomings.

**Tenth Plan: Take-off time for the sector**

Hydrotherapy is a sector that has gone through a stagnation period in the sense that it has not developed to the expected level. But what is certain is that, if the Ninth Plan has succeeded in privatising the sector with complete State disengagement, it has also initiated studies for a better sector’s vision with a view to promoting investment.

The Tenth Plan should witness the take-off of the thermal sector in Tunisia given the number of promoters who expressed their intention to invest in Tunisia. From now on, there is a will to create a new activity that one should know how to ‘sell’ with the highest degree of professionalism. On this point, Tunisia is well-endowed, knowing that it benefits from a situation and an environment that can challenge any competition. The take-off of the thermal sector will enrich Tunisian tourism, as indicated by Mrs Mongia Mahjoubi, and generate activity in regions that are well inside the country such as the northwest and the south.

*Mahar Chaâbane*