

The Emerging Demands of Better For You Ingredients



Nowadays, consumers are becoming more aware on the importance of **healthy lifestyles**. That being said, the health trend and societal changes are the major drivers that contribute to the **growing demand for “better for you” ingredients** in the food and beverage industry.

Clean Label

Consumers are becoming more interested in knowing about the **ingredient quality and the health benefits** when making food choices. That is why more and more consumers are looking at the product labels before making their purchase. Through these buying behaviors, **clean label is gaining significance** and is rapidly evolving into mainstream food and beverage industries.

Clean label can be defined as label claims such as **“all natural”, “minimally processed,” and “non-GMO (Kantha, 2018)**. According to a recent survey done by McFadden & Lusk (2018), consumers see ‘organic’

and ‘non-GMO’ food labels as synonymous and **willing to pay more** for both – 35% more for those labelled “non-GMO Project” and 40% more for those labelled “USDA Organic.

Fiber Enrichment

Insufficient dietary fibre intake is always a nutrition concern. Thus, adequate intake of dietary fiber is certainly important in achieving **good digestive health**.

Inulin and Oligofructose (FOS) are one of the best choices of dietary fiber. They are natural non-digestible carbohydrates from chicory roots and are associated to aid in maintaining good digestive health. They support overall healthy intestinal **environment** which contributes to improved stool frequency. FDA ruling has further reinforced the claim of **Inulin and Oligofructose (FOS)** being beneficial dietary ingredients for customers to improve their nutritional quality and bridging the fiber gap (FDA, 2018). According to EFSA (2015), significant results were demonstrated whereby 12g of inulin daily is proven to help increase stool frequency, in which supports digestive health.

Inulin and Oligofructose are **soluble in cold water and can be added into almost any applications** including baked goods, sport beverages, creamy dairy desserts, confectioneries, breakfast cereals, dairy alternatives and the list goes on. Alternatively, it can be sprinkled directly on your meals.

Sugar Reduction

World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended that the intake of free sugars **should not exceed 10%** of total dietary energy intake for both adults and children. Although sugar is a great source of energy and can be quickly metabolized and absorbed by our bodies, it **provides “empty” calories and lacks minerals and vitamins**. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the health detriments of sugar, especially when consumed excessively.

Monk Fruit extract derives from a dried fruit known as *Luo Han Guo*. It is a **natural sweetener** in which the glycosides in the fruit gives the sweet taste, thus being an all-natural and a **zero-calorie sweetener** (Balachandran, 2018). The sweetness of Monk Fruit extract is reported to be **100 to 300 times sweeter**

than sugar depending on the structure of the mogrosides, the number of glucose units and its food matrix (FDA, 2018; Bajwa & Goraya, 2016). It is so sweet that only small amounts are needed to sweeten foods (Boyle, 2015). They can be also marketed to diabetics and those who want to cut down on sugar intake.

Protein – The Star Health Halo Ingredient

Protein is another star health halo ingredient and is forecasted to grow at a CAGR close to 9% within year 2019 to 2023. Increasing health consciousness among consumers contributes to protein's positive growth. The expanding global vegan population also becomes one of the primary contributors for the global plant-based protein market growth (Technavio, 2018).

Today, **protein consumption** is no longer meant only for workouts but also to **power up our days**. The source of plant protein market is segmented into **wheat protein, soy protein, pea protein and other cereal proteins**. Proteins deriving from plants are available in various forms including protein concentrate, protein isolate and textured protein. Consumers are more inclined towards plant protein as it contains **higher nutritional profiles**, including ease of digestibility, sustainable source, high nutritional value and being a non-allergic nature (Mordor Intelligence, 2018).

Plant-based Ingredients

Natural and simple diets are further expanding vegetarian, vegan and other plant-focused formulations. The industry is welcoming more products that utilize plants as key ingredients as consumers are seeking more fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds, herbs and other plant-based ingredients for their shopping list.

Rice protein is increasingly considered as an **alternative and economic** source of high quality plant-based protein while also being **natural, gluten-free, non-GMO, hypo-allergenic along with an excellent amino acid profile and protein digestibility** (Beneo, 2016).

Chia is another plant-based nutritious ancient seed. This magnificent seed not only provides **sustainable energy and endurance** but also a nutrient dense source of soluble and **insoluble fibre, plant omegas and protein**. According to USDA (2016), the dietary fiber content in chia seeds is **higher** than flax seeds and

quinoa seeds. Chia seeds contain remarkable source of essential minerals that includes **magnesium, calcium, potassium and phosphorus**. In comparison to 100g milk, Chia seed contains **six times more calcium, eleven times more phosphorus and four times more potassium (Munoz et al., 2012)**.

Sodium Reduction

Although sodium reduction is a priority for food manufacturers, it is not a major health concern for majority of the consumers. However, WHO (2018) recommended consumers to keep salt intake to **less than 5g daily** for healthy diet. The Dietary Guidelines also recommend that the general population consume no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day (**about a teaspoon of table salt**) (USDA, 2015).

We tend to consume too much sodium in our daily food intake and often times are **unaware of the actual amount of salt** we consume as it may be added on in processed foods including ready meals, processed meats such as bacon, ham and salami, cheese, salty snacks. Excess salt may also occur in the frequently consumed food such as bread, condiments and seasonings that are used in cooking such as stock cubes, table salt and sauces. High sodium intake contributes to **high blood pressure which leads to heart disease and stroke (Mozaffarian et al., 2014)**.

Conclusion

Consumers nowadays are becoming more health conscious and **demand for healthier food choice**. They are willing to pay a premium price for **healthier products** that offer various functional benefits.

“Better for you ingredients” will continue to shine bright as food manufacturers are increasingly including healthy ingredients in fortified and functional food and beverages applications to capture consumer spending. The creativity and innovation of manufacturers has successfully promoted the **“better for you ingredients”** into the food industry, expanding to end market with products that have healthier nutritional benefits.

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