

Catering to a healthier 2019

25 January 2019 | Opinion | By Christian Philippsen

The demand for healthier products in Asia Pacific has been on a steady rise for some time and is set to continue growing.



For many of us, the new year offers us a chance to reflect on ways we would like to improve our lives. Something at the top of many people's new year resolutions lists is health and eating better, with consumers looking at how they can lead healthier lifestyles throughout the year ahead.

For food manufacturers, 'new year, new me' resolutions present an opportunity, although this is not limited to the start of the year. In fact, the demand for healthier products in Asia Pacific has been on a steady rise for some time and is set to continue growing.

The total sales of health food in Mainland China are expected to grow from RMB 237.6 billion in 2017 to RMB 300 billion in 2021, while an extraordinary 98% of consumers in Singapore are reportedly trying to improve their diet. Products made from natural sources are also increasingly seen as healthier alternatives, with 67% of consumers in Australia and New Zealand willing to spend more on food produced with natural ingredients.

Along with eating healthier, consumers are also vigilant about the threats posed by serious and common health conditions. For instance, more than two out of three consumers in Asia Pacific expressed concern about diabetes^[4].

Food manufacturers can take advantage of this market potential by incorporating BENEÓ's natural and functional ingredients to produce healthier products. These ingredients are also effective in helping consumers manage their blood sugar levels, a key requisite to combatting health conditions such as diabetes.

Managing blood sugar management – effectively and tasty

There are two effective ways to minimise the glycaemic effect of food products. The first is to modify the glucose supply with fully available, yet low glycaemic carbohydrates such as Palatinose™ (isomaltulose); ensuring the carbohydrate energy enters the body in a balanced way. The second is to reduce overall glucose supply by sugar replacement, using partially (e.g. the sugar replacer ISOMALT) or non-available carbohydrates (e.g. the prebiotic fibres Orafiti® Inulin and Orafiti®

Oligofructose).

Derived from the sugar beet, Palatinose™ has a mild sugar-like sweet taste. It supplies the body with the same amount of energy as other common, high glycaemic carbohydrates, but in a more balanced way. This is because Palatinose™ is fully digested by the enzymes in the small intestine but four to five times more slowly, which leads to a slow release of glucose into the blood, resulting in an overall low glycaemic response.

Incorporating Palatinose™ is also an effective way to cater to consumers who want to manage their weight as part of their new year's resolution. Due to its ability to keep blood sugar and insulin levels low, Palatinose™ accelerates fat burning in energy metabolism. As insulin is a storage hormone, low insulin levels means fat can be used more effectively as an energy source. In the long term, consumers will benefit from less fat accumulation. Hence it is potentially providing longer-term benefits for glucose control, body composition and weight management.

An alternative method to generate a lower glycaemic response in foods is to reduce the amount of glucose it supplies. Substituting fully available carbohydrates with partially available ones such as BENEО's ISOMALT, or to non-available ones such as the company's prebiotic chicory root fiber inulin and oligofructose is an effective way to lower glucose supply.

ISOMALT, the only sugar replacer from beet sugar, has a very low effect on blood sugar levels and does not trigger insulin release to any significant extent. With its sugar-like taste, this bulk sweetener can replace sugar in a 1:1 ratio in various applications. Aside from being the number one sugar replacer in sugar-free hard candies worldwide, it is also popular in products like chewing gum, baked goods and cereals.

BENEО's functional fibres inulin and oligofructose, are an additional option when looking to reduce the glucose supply of foods. They are both non-available prebiotic fibres, naturally derived from the chicory root and they both have a mild sweet taste. Partially replacing high glycaemic sugars, these chicory root fibres effectively reduce the glycaemic response of foods. While reducing the amount of sugar, they still offer excellent sensorial taste and texture results. At the same time, inulin and oligofructose also enrich foods with fibre content, thus helping consumers to reach the recommended level of dietary fibre intake.

To a healthier year ahead

Consumer demand for healthier foods has gathered significant pace and will continue to grow in the year to come. By incorporating BENEО's ingredients such as Palatinose™, Isomalt, Orafiti® inulin and oligofructose, manufacturers will be able to produce foods that are healthy and appealing to consumers, ultimately making it easier for them to fulfil their new year's resolution.

Christian Philippsen, Managing Director, BENEО Asia Pacific