

Unlocking Healthy Aging: How Functional Ingredients Support Wellness at Every Life Stage

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Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world. It is also home to an ageing population where the elderly account for nearly 12% of the population. As of 2022, Indonesia's senior population amounted to nearly 19 million^[1].

According to the Indonesian Health Ministry, this reflects an increased life expectancy as a result of improved access to health. This may also stem from research which states that Indonesian consumers are far more active in taking steps to age healthily than the average global consumer (72 per cent in Indonesia versus 57 per cent globally^[2]). However, even as their lives are getting longer, periods of illnesses are also extending, said the ministry at a July 2024 meeting ahead of the recent Senior Expo in Jakarta.

Complex diet-related health challenges are among these, on top of weakened immunities, gastrointestinal disorders, bone mineral density declines, frailty and osteoarthritis, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes or cardiovascular diseases, and even cognitive impairment.

To stay independent and thrive, it's essential to embrace smart strategies for healthy aging. Nourishing your body with the right foods at every stage of life can boost well-being and help fend off diet-related health issues.

A Long-Term Approach to Lasting Health

As age increases, so does the risk of NCDs. These are influenced by a range of factors, such as having high blood glucose, blood fat levels or raised blood pressure, as well as by being overweight or obese.

To mitigate these risks, it is encouraging that two in three Indonesians are (very) interested in food and drink products that help maintain healthy blood sugar levels (68 per cent) and reduce the risk of developing diabetes[3]. One key strategy to achieve these is maintaining a healthy gut, as an imbalanced gut microbiota – affected by diet, lifestyle, and age – can lead to frailty, diseases, diabetes, and depression, ultimately affecting overall well-being.

Fortunately, in recent years, consumers have been taking a more long-term approach to their health, especially when it comes to their food choices. According to a global consumer survey by One Inch Whale on behalf of BENEÓ, almost 7 in 10 consumers believe that healthy foods give them control over their future health. In some countries, such as Indonesia, this percentage is even higher, at around 85 per cent[4].

But despite what many believe, healthy eating doesn't only equate to consuming fruits and greens. They can also look towards prebiotics – the ingredient that nourishes our beneficial gut microbiota, which is important for overall health and wellbeing. The understanding how important a balanced gut microbiota is, is increasing. More than half of consumers (57 per cent) in Asia Pacific are very or extremely interested in the gut microbiome[5].

Safeguarding Our Immune Health with Prebiotic Chicory Root Fibres

In order to boost our overall health, we must support the good bacteria in our bodies that provide benefits to the human organism. Prebiotics help the good bacteria which are already naturally present in the body to grow.

Zeroing into Indonesia, almost four in five (78 per cent) local consumers recognise the link between their digestive health and their long-term health, hence it is not surprising that a similar percentage finds food and drink products positioned around improving digestive health appealing[6].

According to the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) a prebiotic is – a substrate that is selectively utilised by host microorganisms conferring a health benefit.[7] There are only very few prebiotics which are scientifically and clinically proven to be classified as such. BENEÓ's chicory root fibres, Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose, belong to this exclusive group of proven prebiotics, complying with the ISAPP definition. The National Agency of Drug and Food Control of Indonesia (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan) has also approved a prebiotic claim for the chicory root fibres inulin and oligofructose, and they are now the first and only ingredients recognised as prebiotics in the country.

In fact, a recently published systematic literature review with meta-analyses explored the effects of inulin-type fructans derived from chicory root, based on 50 human intervention studies. The findings revealed that chicory root fibre intake (starting at 3g/day) promotes significant growth of beneficial Bifidobacteria in the gut microbiome in all age groups and improves bowel function parameters[8]. Other benefits provided by chicory root fibres relate

to blood sugar management[9], immune health[10], weight management[11][12], and calcium absorption for bone health[13][14].

Additionally, chicory root fibres contribute to a low glycaemic diet by replacing –fast– carbohydrates and enriching the food with a dietary fibre. Chicory root fibres also allow for the reduction of sugar and fat in food formulations, thereby improving its nutritional profile while simultaneously supporting effective blood sugar management.

Even in terms of technical properties, BENEÓ's Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose are proving popular with producers, as they are soluble dietary fibres that can be easily added to recipe formulations without major changes to the production process. Also, they have a mild taste and don't add an unwanted aftertaste to the end product.

Healthy Eating Without Sacrificing Taste and Texture

Prioritising smart nutrition choices is key to a vibrant, healthful lifestyle.

BENEÓ's prebiotic fibres Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose are popular with manufacturers as they bring the added benefits of being natural, are non-GMO, and clean label – as they are obtained from chicory root via a gentle hot water extraction.

Furthermore as mentioned earlier, with chicory root fibres being soluble fibres with texturising properties, this means they can also be used in a wide range of food and beverage applications including bakery, cereals, confectionery and dairy (alternatives), without introducing an undesirable aftertaste.

This could prove to be highly beneficial for Indonesia and the broader Asia Pacific region – where the population aged 60 and above is expected to double to 1.3 billion by 2050. As immunity naturally weakens with age, food developers have the

opportunity to protect consumers' health with prebiotic chicory root fibres while also crafting delicious and appealing products.

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- [5] HealthFocus International Trends Studies 2022
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