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The Asia-Pacific region is rapidly emerging as the global hub for growth in the nutraceutical industry. According to Euromonitor, Southeast Asia is expected to maintain its status as the world's fastest-growing market through 2029, a trend that is reflected in Sirio Pharmaâ??s impressive results. In 2024, the company reported a 77 per cent increase in its APAC revenues (excluding China), with Australia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia leading this growth.

In response to this rising demand, Sirio, one of the worldâ??s foremost Contract Development and Manufacturing Organisations (CDMOs) for nutraceuticals, has announced plans to establish its first regional manufacturing site in Thailand, slated to open by 2027.

In a recent interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Alex Du, General Manager of Sirio Pharma's Asia-Pacific business unit, shared his insights on regional trends, market complexities, and the growing need for innovation. He discussed how Sirio is assisting clients in accelerating development timelines and unlocking growth through next-generation formats, such as high-dose gummies, clean-label collagen, and halal-certified products.

Q) Are there any regional-specific trends you see or differences with other markets?

Product launches in this region have been predominantly dominated by larger and often consolidated regional players, with these companies seeking to launch products into multiple markets simultaneously.

This trend is especially pronounced in Australia, where a few large players dominate the market demand for nutraceutical products. The consequential effect of this, is that being first to market and establishing market presence is often the key factor in delivering a successful product launch. Which is why we are partnering so successfully in this region, as we can go from an idea to commercial supply in as little as year â?? which is significantly faster than they will be able to achieve alone â?? while also enabling our partners to concentrate on day-to-day sales as we advance their next generation of products through R&D. In a growing market like APAC, the speed of your R&D engine is going to be a major factor in how much of the expanding market you can capture.

Q) Are there any particular complexities of challenges of working in these markets?

One trend we are seeing a lot of interest in, is how we can shorten the development process and get products launched faster. For example, are we able to offer relevant, ready-to-go products that can meet the halal, Zone IVB requirements for customers to launch quicker? But also, are there innovative products that we can offer to customers so that they are first to launch with truly novel nutraceuticals, that lead and even define future market demand?

Parallel to this, nutra brands are becoming much more time-sensitive and adventurous and, with our help, are reimagining the types of products they bring to market. So we can expect a much higher level of product innovation in Thailand, Singapore and Australia in the next 2-3 years. Brands are using innovation-driven CDMOs to help synergise customer trends with R&D capabilities, so they are always at the cutting edge of whatâ??s possible in product innovation.

Q) What is the growth expectation for Sirio in these markets and what kind of products are in demand in the region?

In 2024, we recorded close to USD 40 million in sales from the APAC region excluding China, with Australia and Singapore emerging as especially strong performers. Looking ahead, I anticipate even greater momentum in faster-growing markets such as Indonesia and Thailand. This is why weâ??re increasingly focused on enabling clients to bring distinctive, high-impact innovations to these markets.

In terms of product types, while we are always delighted to help partners develop novel nutra products of any type, we see several specific products we think will really lead growth here. And we have innovated in advance to bring these to market.

The main sectors of focus in Australia are fish oil and gummies, which are expected to have the highest sales. Other key categories include multivitamins for both children and adults, beauty supplements, and â?? especially in higher GDP countries such as Singapore and Australia â?? sports nutrition, which is a trend influenced by Western markets. In fact in Singapore, sports nutrition has already become the leading category.

Weâ??re seeing real excitement around high-dosage functional ingredients like protein, creatine, and BCAAsâ??especially in gummy formats with dose loading above what was previously possible and this will be a major trend for our customers. While powders and liquids used to dominate, the shift toward gummies reflects a consumer desire for formats that are both effective and enjoyable to consume. In Australia, the rapid growth of the sports nutrition sector is setting the stage for muscle gain and performance-enhancing gummies, likely to emerge as a major category shortly.

Looking at flavours, we believe brands in SE Asia and Australia will increasingly take inspiration from other markets. As a result, we foresee sour-flavoured gummiesâ??already popular in other advanced marketsâ??gaining ground alongside the more familiar berry and tropical profiles in countries like Singapore, Thailand, and Australia

Q) What are you seeing in womenâ??s health in the region?

Like in other global markets, womenâ??s health for premium beauty products remains a massive and growing trend, with collagen (in various forms), biotin, iron and collagen peptides with higher bioavailability, and various combinations of these ingredients all proving extremely popular. The challenge is that this segment is now extremely popular and our partners need products with new technologies that will stand out over and above the competition. So, for example, we have recently launched a new type of gummy using collagen as the gelling agent â?? rather than pectin or gelatin â?? which means a more â??clean labelâ?? gummy, i.e. with less additive/excipient, but also even higher dosing of collagen actives.

Sirioâ??s PeptivatorÂ® Collagen Peptide â?? an ingredient developed to help with skin moisture and thought to aid in skin recovery â?? is produced using a precise collagen cutting technique and leads to enhanced skin hydration, offering a new dimension to the trending skincare regimes.

Another class we expect to do extremely well in both Thailand and Australia are our microeffervescent products that provide a pleasant, sizzling taste and require no water, making them highly convenient. They are being developed for vitamins and probiotics. Lastly, we hope to see bigger uptake for our Plantegrity^{TM} series, which includes vegetarian softgels made from carrageenan or gellan gum. While the EnteriClearâ?¢ line features gellan gum softgels produced using a one-step molding process, which eliminates the need for an additional coating [i.e. there is no fishy aftertaste, and this technology comes at a highly competitive price point].

Q) Are there any other major regional trends that affect how brands should come to market?

Yes, one notable regional trend, that is far smaller here than say in the USA or Europe, is we see lower sales of premium brands via websites. Instead, consumers strongly prefer buying from â??specialist shopsâ?? and/or â??pharmaciesâ?? in Singapore, Australia and Thailand â?? with these outlets combined accounting for about 60% of sales in each country. Why is this significant? Because it shows that consumers here are looking for proven products in trusted consumer stores, with excellent dose delivery and good quality controls. So when it comes to developing these products, you are going to need a partner that can both meet all the regional requirements, innovate quickly to beat your potential rivals, but also,*go-to-market* backed by rigorous testing so that you pass the higher standards required to sell within these types of outlets. Therefore, what we see is that the majority of growth in these regions will come from customers looking for premium products and newer nutraceutical combinations and technologies.

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