

Formulating for Healthspan: The Shift to Metabolic-First Nutrition in APAC

17 July 2026 | Features | By Christian Philippsen, Managing Director, BENEIO Asia

Across Asia, longer lives and a growing interest in preventive health are reshaping what consumers expect from food and nutrition



For decades, weight management has traditionally been framed around restriction: eating smaller portions with less calories yielded a lower number on the scale. But that equation is beginning to change. Increasingly, consumers are looking beyond calorie counting and more towards sustained energy, metabolic health and the ability to remain active for longer.

Across Asia, longer lives and a growing interest in preventive health are reshaping what consumers expect from food and nutrition. At the same time, the scale of the weight-management challenge remains substantial: in Southeast Asia alone, it is estimated that more than 52.4 million adults will be living with obesity in the region by 2030^[1].

For manufacturers, the implication is clear: products must support not just weight loss or maintenance but also help extend healthspan.

From Weight Loss to Holistic Health

The healthspan reframes what a good outcome for healthy ageing looks like: the number of years a person lives in good health, not just the total years they live. Consumers want to remain energetic, mobile and metabolically healthy for longer.

A healthspan mindset asks a broader question than how to lose weight efficiently: how can food help people feel satisfied, remain properly nourished and provide the energy needed to stay active? Severe dietary restrictions can reduce energy and nutrient intake, and may strip away valuable lean body mass, not just fat.

The rise of GLP-1 medication has accelerated this conversation by bringing appetite regulation, satiety and metabolic health into mainstream awareness. For manufacturers, the opportunity is to consider what people need from everyday nutrition as expectations around wellness evolve.

This growing health-consciousness is also translating into consumer demand. 69% of global consumers say they would be interested in purchasing food or beverages that naturally stimulate GLP-1 hormones[2]. Rather than viewing GLP-1 solely through the lens of pharmaceuticals, this presents an opportunity for manufacturers to explore how everyday foods can naturally support the body's own metabolic processes.

Formulating for healthspan starts with a closer look at not just how much energy a product provides, but how that energy is metabolised.

Why Carbohydrate Quality Matters

Carbohydrates are an important source of energy, particularly for people seeking to maintain an active lifestyle. Yet they are not all metabolised in the same way. How quickly a carbohydrate is digested and absorbed influences the body's blood glucose and insulin response, as well as whether it primarily draws on carbohydrates or fat for fuel.

Palatinose™ (isomaltulose), a naturally sourced carbohydrate from sugar beet with a low glycaemic profile, illustrates why this distinction matters. Compared with sucrose, it is digested more slowly, releasing the same amount of glucose into the bloodstream over a longer period. This produces a lower and steadier blood glucose response, with less insulin release than higher-glycaemic reference carbohydrates[3].

Its unique molecular structure and slow-release properties allow Palatinose™ to reach the lower parts of the small intestine, where it stimulates the natural release of beneficial gut hormones such as GLP-1 and PYY. These hormones play an important role in appetite regulation, satiety and balanced blood glucose levels, further demonstrating how carbohydrate quality can support metabolic health through everyday nutrition.

The resulting metabolic profile allows the body to burn more fat for energy. In a randomised, controlled study involving Asian men, low-glycaemic meals incorporating isomaltulose were associated with lower glycaemic variability and greater fat oxidation than higher-glycaemic meals containing sucrose[4].

The point is not that carbohydrates should be eliminated. It is that their metabolic quality can help manufacturers deliver sustained energy while supporting weight management and healthspan goals.

Better Gut Health for Better Satiety

Feeling hungry one or two hours after a meal is an issue many people can relate to. Satiety develops across the digestive process, creating an opportunity to combine ingredients that act through complementary mechanisms.

Barley beta-glucans, for example, improve satiety and fullness by increasing viscosity in the gastrointestinal tract and by slowing down gastric emptying.[5] BENEØ's Orafiti® ?-Fit, a beta-glucan-rich wholegrain barley flour, allows manufacturers to introduce this functionality into familiar food formats such as bread, cereals and noodles, while enriching them with fibre.

Prebiotic fibres work further along the digestive tract. BENEØ's Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose chicory root fibres have been scientifically proven to support digestive health and long-term weight control by increasing satiety, reducing calorie intake and improving body composition.[6] They belong to the exclusive group of prebiotics complying with the ISAPP definition[7] and can be used for fibre enrichment, as well as sugar and fat reduction in a range of applications from bakery,

cereals and snacks to dairy.

Together, these fibre types offer a more complete way to think about satiety: promoting an initial feeling of fullness while also supporting digestive health.

More Nourishment in Every Bite

When people eat less, whether through lifestyle changes or calorie restriction or medication, the nutritional quality of every eating occasion becomes more important. Weight loss often reduces lean body mass alongside fat, making adequate protein intake and resistance exercise central to muscle preservation. Plant proteins, for example those derived from faba bean and rice, are as satiating as animal protein and provide high-quality amino acids to further support muscle maintenance. Together, rice and faba bean protein complement each other and provide a complete essential amino acids profile.

This is where the different elements of metabolic-first formulation come together. Low-glycaemic carbohydrates can provide sustained energy and support fat oxidation. Prebiotic fibres and beta-glucans can support satiety, digestive health and overall diet quality and plant-based proteins offer additional support for satiety and muscle maintenance.

The larger opportunity for the industry is not to create increasingly restrictive products. It is to formulate everyday foods that help consumers feel satisfied, stay energised and receive the nourishment needed to remain active for longer – without compromising on indulgence and enjoyment. Food and drink manufacturers should help them get more from what they consume. That is what formulating for people's healthspan ultimately requires.

[1] World Obesity Federation (2022), World Obesity Atlas 2022, www.worldobesity.org/resources/resource-library/world-obesity-atlas-2022

[2] FMCG Gurus Report, GLP1: Diet Food Killer or Market Opportunity?, Nov 2025

[3] BENEIO, Palatinose™ (isomaltulose) – A slow-release carbohydrate derived from nature for improved metabolism and health. www.beneio.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/beneio-paper-palatinose-en-202402v1-web.pdf

[4] Henry, C. J., Kaur, B., Quek, R. Y. C., and Camps, S. G. (2017). A low glycaemic index diet incorporating isomaltulose is associated with lower glycaemic response and variability, and promotes fat oxidation in Asians. *Nutrients*, 9(5), 473. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5452203/>

[5] Thondre PS, Shafat A, Clegg ME. Molecular weight of barley β -glucan influences energy expenditure, gastric emptying and glycaemic response in human subjects. *British Journal of Nutrition*. 2013;110(12):2173-2179. doi:10.1017/S0007114513001682

[6] Reimer RA, Theis S, Zander JC. The effects of chicory inulin-type fructans supplementation on weight management outcomes: systematic review, meta-analysis and meta-regression of randomized controlled trials. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2024 Sep 21:S0002-9165(24)00751-2. doi: 10.1016/j.ajcnut.2024.09.019. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39313030.

[7] Gibson GR, Hutkins R, Sanders ME et al. (2017) Expert consensus document: The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) consensus statement on the definition and scope of prebiotics. *Nat Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol* 14(8): 491–502. <https://www.nature.com/articles/nrgastro.2017.75.pdf> See also: <https://isappscience.org/>