

# FUNCTIONAL CANDY & SNACKS

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by 2020, and he reports Geneden's food and beverage division launched 18 probiotic products in third quarter 2014 alone.

However, Tom Vierhile, Innovation Insights director at market research firm Datamonitor Consumer, asserts that although the current and projected global market for probiotics is vibrant — it was valued at \$25 billion in 2013 — the rest of the functional food segment isn't as vigorous. Noting more functional food innovations were brought to the U.S. market in 2009 than in 2014, Vierhile says the real growth is in the international market.

## WEIGHING NUTRIENT OPTIONS

In spite of a vaunted desire for more nutritious snacks, limited nutrients find public acceptance, particularly in snacks and candy. Vierhile points to a 2013 Datamonitor survey in which 52 percent of respondents said foods naturally high in nutrients were very appealing, whereas just 18 percent found nutrient-enhanced items attractive. "There's some legitimacy for foods enhanced with fiber," he points out.

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## FORTIFIED, FUNCTIONAL, NUTRACEUTICAL OR JUST FOOD?

THE LEXICON FOR FOODS with something extra can be confusing. For example, the Mayo Clinic defines functional foods as those having a potentially beneficial effect on health beyond simple nutrition, such as milk, and can be modified — fortified — with nutrients to achieve that goal, such as bread with added fiber. However, the FDA prohibits fortification of candy and certain other consumables.

Nutraceuticals, on the other hand, have no legal definition. The term is an amalgam of "nutrient" and "pharmaceutical" and can be applied to foods, dietary supplements, herbal preparations and even diets. Coined by Stephen DeFelice, MD, founder and chairman of the Foundation for Innovation in Medicine, it's generally used to describe food-based items that are believed to have additional benefits to health.

In 1994, the FDA imposed strict limitations on the use of the word "healthy" and variations of it in the name or description of a food or beverage. Thus, a product that is low in fat and sodium, such as candy, can't use the term "healthy" unless it also contains at least 10 percent of the RDV of specific nutrients, primarily occurring naturally in the food. **CST**

Also at the top of the list of better-for-you ingredients were green tea, probiotics and real fruit, and Vierhile foresees growth in snacks containing vegetables and seeds. According to Geneden's Bush, the market for probiotic items is a female-dominated space, and the reasons for buying them varies with age: 18- to 35-year-olds buy them to reduce bloating; 35- to 50-year-olds buy them for their own digestive needs and to boost their children's immune systems; those older than 50 seek the immune and digestive benefits.

Archer Daniels Midland Co. (ADM) Director of R&D Allan Buck explains: "It's often difficult to make specific claims on candy and snacks, so enhancements are often ingredients that the consumer will recognize for certain benefits. For example, consumers recognize nuts as having higher omega 3 fatty acids. Protein and fiber are two macro ingredients consumers recognize as being beneficial in most any food or beverage."

However, Vierhile warns there are "huge hurdles for enhanced candy and snacks. Consumers will skip the trend of better-for-you in products not known as better-for-you. Fortification works best when the enhancement makes sense, such as adding fiber or protein to snacks or bars."

NPD Group, Inc. reports 50 percent of consumers turn to animal sources (including fish) for protein and 22 percent reach for nuts, seeds and protein bars. Ironically, the research firm also learned that nearly half of consumers (48 percent) aren't overly concerned about protein per se, and another 19 percent say they are "knowledgeable but indifferent" to it.

The appeal of nutrient-enhanced candy and snacks lies in their ability to allow busy consumers to balance convenience, indulgence and health benefits, says Laura Bergan, senior marketing manager, Barry Callebaut AG, adding the majority of consumers have realistic expectations about what they're eating.

However, she points out: "It has to taste good and come in a format people want. Healthy is on the list, but flavor trumps everything."

According to Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate Marketing Manager Courtney LeDrew, consumers' interest in enhanced foods also presents new business and marketing opportunities for candy and snack brands to add better-for-you items as the health and wellness market expands globally.

Packom Sweets, LLC CEO Nicholas Busuic reports consumers of the company's Jake Vitamin Candy aren't buying it as a supplement. "We're a candy and a food; an impulse product, not a nutraceutical," he says, explaining the product was developed to provide a healthier