

FUNCTIONAL CANDY & SNACKS

version of an item people are already consuming — adding vitamins simply allows consumers to close a gap in nutrition.

Busuic attributes growing acceptance of the product to an increased interest by consumers in taking better care of their health, living longer, and “understanding that if you abuse the body when you’re young, you will pay for it later.”

Enriching candy and snacks also helps deliver nutrients to consumers who can’t tolerate them in other forms, Ganeden’s Bush points out. For example, although daily ingestion of probiotics has been shown to benefit digestive health, the amount of yogurt a person would have to eat daily to gain optimal benefits isn’t feasible. “The solution is to incorporate probiotics into foods people already consume,” Bush observes.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS AFFECT SUCCESS

According to Cargill’s LeDrew, as with most items, product development of nutrient-enriched items starts with an understanding of the desired flavor, form and function, which play a key role in formulation and manufacturing processes and affect viscosity, cost and shelf life. “For example, adding dairy protein to coatings to achieve a protein claim tends to increase viscosity,” she explains.

One drawback of entering the better-for-you market is that developing or adapting formulations can increase product costs. “A complex recipe with a large number of inclusions and ingredients affects production time and labor costs, which are factored into the item cost,” LeDrew explains. Finally, shelf life is affected by water-based ingredients, and inclusions increase the amount of water available for microbial growth.

In working with nutrients, Adams Hutt advises asking: Is the vitamin heat- and light-stable or sensitive in the recipe and pack format? For example, vitamins B and C need to be encapsulated to protect them from ascorbic acid. Does it react to the presence of other ingredients, such as acids or iron? Does it affect cosmetic properties of the formulation or hinder nutrient interaction?

Bush cautions that while probiotics can be incorporated in the formulations of a wide array of foods consumers already eat, to confer benefit, the organisms must be live when consumed, and they tend to degrade with time.

In addition, prolonged exposure to high heat and humidity in substrates during formulation can kill organisms; however, Bush says chocolate and yogurt-covered items are good choices for probiotic ingredients.

LeDrew warns: “It’s important to account for

changeover and cleanout differences in the production facility and how this can affect the nutrient content of the finished product. If the finished product has a nutrient claim, it has to be tested to ensure nutritional levels are met.”

In addition, she says manufacturers must follow the FDA Code of Federal Regulations carefully to ensure they make accurate claims on packs, promotional materials and the like, and ADM’s Buck cautions: “There is often a fine line between acceptable and non-acceptable product labels and positioning.”

As to whether consumers already using supplements could be harmed by eating enhanced foods — too much vitamin A, for example — Adams Hutt maintains: “They’re still too far away from reaching the upper limit of tolerance. It’s not a matter for concern.”

MARKET GROWTH WILL VARY

What’s the future for these better-for-you segments? Barry Callebaut’s Bergan anticipates North American consumers’ appetites for items that balance indulgence with a healthy component won’t flag. “Chocolate is a subsegment with some growth potential, especially with dark chocolate’s health halo,” she says. “For snack bars, I see areas of growth, depending on the subsegments.”

According to Ricardo Rodriguez, bakery and confection marketing manager for Ingredion, Inc., manufacturers entering the health and wellness arena can realize substantial growth. He cites the 20 percent increase in dollar value of vitamin gummies between 2013 and 2014 as an example of market potential.

Change also is coming to the probiotics market, according to Bush. Growth is expected from two demographics: active adults and athletes who want to avoid the gastrointestinal issues triggered by excessive consumption of protein and overtraining.

Attributing a strong future to consumers’ increased interest in health and wellbeing, Busuic predicts: “The next expansion will be in the 14- to 16-year-old demographic and those 40 years old and above.”

With analysts at Frost & Sullivan projecting a \$10.8 trillion global health and wellness market within the coming six years, both demand and opportunities for enhanced foods are unparalleled. After all, as Vierhile observes, given a choice between a nutrient in tablet form or in food, most people will select the food option. **CST**

‘Consumers are typically willing to pay more for these products because they perceive and understand the added value.’

RICARDO RODRIGUEZ
Ingredion Inc.

WHICH CLAIMS MATTER?

Regardless of the portion of U.S. adults who say they are pursuing a more nutritious diet, 2,000 adults surveyed in 2011 about the nutrient claims they considered most important responded:

High in **FIBER**: 17%

Low in **SUGAR** or sugarfree: 17%

Low or **NO FAT**: 16%

High in **CALCIUM**: 13%

Low or **NO SALT**: 9%

High in **OMEGA 3**: 9%

Low or **NO CALORIES**: 8%

High in **ANTIOXIDANTS**: 8%

High in **PROTEIN**: 8%

High in **VITAMINS** and **MINERALS**: 6%

SOURCE: PACKAGED FACTS