

MEDIA UPDATE

Chinese consumers increasingly seeking better nutrition for improved gut health *48% of the respondents agreed that taking care of digestive health is part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle*

Chinese consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of gut health. In a recent consumer survey conducted by the market research company InSites on behalf of BENEEO, 72% of Chinese consumers believe that diet plays a major role in building a healthy lifestyle. Close to half of the respondents also agreed that taking care of their digestive health is an important consideration in maintaining overall well-being.

Chinese consumers are also showing a growing concern for their digestive issues. A quarter of the respondents cited that they are frequently affected by digestive issues, with 62% indicating that digestive problems are a concern. A third of respondents also agreed that better digestive health has a positive impact on their emotional health and helps improve quality of life.

Healthy gut, healthy life

Chinese consumers believe a healthy gut ensures better absorption of essential nutrients, like vitamins, minerals and proteins. Dietary fibre is also seen as an important part of an everyday diet for Chinese consumers, and this is reflected in the survey with 3 in 4 consumers saying they look for food with fibre claims or high in fibre. They are also more likely to purchase food with natural and organic ingredients, signalling to the industry the growing importance of food labels to Chinese consumers.

Gut health can impact one's immune system, metabolism, allergies and sleep cycles, among others. Poor gut health has been known to increase an individual's predisposition to cancer, autoimmune diseases and even mental health. The importance of maintaining gut health is thus critical to a healthy population.

"Amid rapid economic growth and urbanisation, Chinese consumers are constantly faced with high stress levels, lack of sleep and a diet high in processed food. This fast-paced lifestyle can damage the balance of bacteria in our gut and in turn affect the overall health of the population. The results of BENEEO's consumer survey show that Chinese consumers are taking action. They are seeking a diet high in prebiotic fibre to ensure the healthy function of the colon. For instance, yoghurt, pre- and probiotics and fibre-enriched foods, including cereals, are increasingly seen as products that have a positive impact on digestive health," said Myriam Snaet, Head of Market Intelligence & Consumer Insights, BENEEO.

Food manufacturers – a force for change

Consumers awareness that the benefits of a healthy digestive system reach out beyond the gut and impact overall health is continuously growing. Food manufacturers can cater to this growing demand for high fibre and natural food. For example, by using BENEEO's all-natural functional ingredients such as the prebiotic fibres from chicory root, manufacturers can improve the nutritional profile of their products and in turn, promote better gut health among consumers.

The chicory plant – an ancient vegetable – stores extra energy in its roots in the form of inulin. BENEEO's Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose, are derived from the chicory root through a gentle hot water extraction

method. Inulin and oligofructose are two of the three scientifically proven prebiotics worldwide according to the International Scientific Association for Pro- and Prebiotics (ISAPP). In addition, they stand out in the market as the only existing prebiotics derived from plant sources.

Both Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose are prebiotic fibres that feed the good bacteria already existing in the gut. Numerous intervention studies have shown that Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose not only support the growth of beneficial intestinal bacteria, such as bifidobacteria and lactobacilli but also inhibit the development of certain potentially harmful bacteria.

These chicory root fibres appeal to food manufacturers as they can be easily incorporated into foods that we consume regularly such as chocolates, cereals, baking and dairy products. The best part is, despite its healthier and natural properties, manufacturers can still maintain the delicious taste of these food products. Another aspect of its appeal to manufacturers is the fact that inulin is the most used fibre in new product developments worldwide (Innova 2019).

A healthier future

China's booming economy has brought many benefits such as improved standards of living for its population. However, with rising disposable income, a growing middle class and busier lifestyles, many Chinese consumers are also more susceptible to an unhealthy food culture.

Food manufacturers can therefore play a key role in helping consumers build a healthy lifestyle, beginning with their gut health. Incorporating Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose to the Chinese consumers' diet will provide healthier options to them, improving their digestive health and in the long term, the overall health of the population.

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BENEO offers functional ingredients derived from chicory roots, beet sugar, rice and wheat. BENEO is the ideal partner to help improve a product in its nutritional and technological characteristics. Key nutritional benefits are 'less fat', 'less sugar', 'less calories', 'added fibre', 'gluten-free' and dairy alternatives as well as energy management, digestive, bone and dental health. Key technological benefits focus on taste and texture improvements. Through a unique chain of expertise, including the BENEO-Institute that provides decisive insights into nutrition science and legislation, and the BENEO-Technology Center that consults in application technology, BENEO actively supports customers in the development of more balanced and healthy food products.

BENEO is a division of the Südzucker Group that employs more than 1000 people and has production units in Belgium, Chile, Germany and Italy.

For further information on BENEO and its ingredients, please visit: www.beneo.com and www.beneonews.com or follow BENEO on Twitter: @_BENEO or LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/beneo