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COVID-19 intensifies consumers' interest in well-being and eco-friendly products

Healthy ingredients and label transparency are more important to consumers than ever before following the COVID-19 pandemic, concludes a new global survey commissioned by the market research company FMCG Gurus on behalf of BENEIO¹.

The results show that across the globe consumers are becoming more conscious about their well-being - particularly immunity - as they question their vulnerability to disease and illness. They are also concerned about the environment and whether the virus' impact has been intensified because of increased levels of environmental damage. As a result of these attitudinal shifts, consumers are looking to purchase food and drink products that increasingly promote well-being and sustain their energy in challenging times, whilst minimising impact on the environment.

Good for you and the environment

Environmental concerns have been heightened as a result of COVID-19. This is in part due to some consumers questioning whether issues such as air pollution have increased respiratory issues, making people more vulnerable to the disease. This concern is being translated into altered buying patterns, with 60% of consumers now being more attentive to the impact that their food and drink has on the environment.

Increased focus on food and drink products that provide health benefits

Furthermore, the widespread effect of COVID-19 has also resulted in 64% of consumers saying that they are now more conscious about their immune health. Even consumers who previously deemed themselves to have a good immune system are now questioning their vulnerability to disease and illness. This is having a direct impact on purchasing behaviour, with two-thirds (64%) of consumers more interested in ingredients, or food and drink products, that provide protective or preventative health benefits. This trend is likely to continue being prevalent in the market for the foreseeable future.



Consumers want natural, sustained energy boosts

In these challenging times, consumers are also looking for ways to fight feelings of fatigue more naturally. In line with this, 34% of consumers say that they are now more likely to seek out food and drink products that boost energy in a sustained and balanced way. Also, not surprisingly, consumers are looking to improve their mental well-being, with more than half (55%) saying they are likely to opt for food and drink to boost their mood. However, formulation is key, as consumers look to avoid ingredients deemed detrimental to their long-term health in pursuit of a short-term energy boost. One opportunity arising from this is the appeal of slow-release, low-glycaemic carbohydrates such as Palatinose™ (isomaltulose), with 45% of consumers believing such carbohydrates are better for their health.

Michael Hughes, Director of Insights at FMCG Gurus, comments: “The results of our latest consumer survey clearly show that beneficial ingredients and label transparency are now more important than ever before to consumers across the globe, as a result of the pandemic. People are exploring topics such as inner defence, staying fit and healthy, blood glucose control, as well as sustained energy and wanting to buy products with proven health benefits. BENEIO is well equipped to help manufacturers tap into these key growth areas. The company’s prebiotic chicory root fibres and slow-release carbohydrate offer a range of scientifically proven health benefits that help support long-term health and can be communicated on pack.”

Myriam Snaet, Head of Market Intelligence and Consumer Insights at BENEIO, explains: “As concern for the environment continues to gather pace, it is important that we all play our part in promoting sustainable business practices. At BENEIO, we actively support sustainable farming, to encourage biodiversity and reduce water pollution and soil erosion. We valorize 100% of our raw material to minimise waste and have reduced our specific energy consumption by 50% over the past 30 years. Looking to the future, we aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, thanks to our recent investments into upgrading and expanding our facilities.”

- Ends -

BENEIO offers functional ingredients derived from chicory roots, beet sugar, rice and wheat. BENEIO 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 BENEIO-Institute that provides decisive insights into nutrition science and legislation, and the BENEIO-Technology Center that consults in application technology, BENEIO actively supports customers in the development of more balanced and healthy food products.

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

FMCG Gurus provides market research and insight into consumer attitudes and behaviours across the food, beverage, and supplement markets around the world. FMCG Gurus are dedicated to being a world leader in consumer insights and market research.

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

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ⁱ Content based on FMCG Guru's COVID-19 survey, July 2020. Eighteen countries surveyed in July 2020 [Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, UK, USA, Vietnam] and a Country Profile survey conducted across nineteen countries in January 2020.