

Press release

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New research shows that sugar seen as “friend AND foe” by European consumers

New quantitative consumer research commissioned by functional ingredients manufacturer BENEEO shows that consumers perceive sugar as both a ‘friend and foe’ in their nutrition. The results also underline that sugar and carbohydrates play a key role in consumer behaviour when dealing with health concerns.

More than 5000 consumers across five European countriesⁱ were surveyed on their perception of sugar, carbohydrates and nutrition, with regard to blood glucose response.

Consumers see carbohydrates as key in health issues

The results show that consumer health concerns in order of importance are weight management (43%), fatigue or low energy (36%) and stress (35%). Consumers are aware that the amount and type of sugars, as well as carbohydrates in general, play a major role in coping with these health issues.

Consumers’ main motivation for sugar reduction in their nutrition was because of its negative effects on their health. 58% of those respondents who wanted to eat less sugar said that their major driver was to control their weight. Also, the detrimental long-term effects of sugar consumption such as diabetes were a concern, being mentioned by nearly one out of three consumers who were trying to cut their sugar intake.

Although wanting to reduce the amount of sugar consumed, respondents were not prepared to forego the feeling of sugar-like indulgence: 60% said that they ate sugar because they liked the taste and one out of three participants (33%) responded that sugar improved their overall mood.

Consumers increasingly differentiate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ carbohydrates

Despite consumers seeing the benefits of less sugar intake, they also recognised that carbohydrates are the major energy source for body and brain. 46% of respondents stated

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that the main reason they consumed carbohydrates was that they “give energy”. At the same time, consumers are starting to differentiate between different types of carbohydrate, with more than one out of two participants making a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ carbohydrates.

Wholegrain, fibre, complex carbohydrates and slow-release carbohydrates were seen as ‘good’; with 51% of respondents regarding slow-release carbohydrates as generally better and 60% linking slow-release carbohydrates with sustained energy.

Choosing ingredients such as the slow release carbohydrate Palatinose™ (isomaltulose), the chicory root fibres Orafit® Inulin and Oligofructose, or the sugar replacer ISOMALT, can help manufacturers to meet consumer demand for alternatives that support healthy weight and energy management. These functional ingredients are naturally derived from beet sugar and chicory root. Having a mild sweet taste they help meet consumer desire for sugar-like indulgence, while improving the nutritional profile by reducing high glycaemic sugars and/or calorie count. BENEEO has received positive EFSA opinions for the blood glucose lowering properties of its dietary fibres oligofructose and inulin, as well as for the unique slow release carbohydrate Palatinose™ and the sugar replacer ISOMALT with corresponding health claim approvals.

Gudrun Dold, Consumer Insights Manager at BENEEO: "The research results show that sugar and carbohydrates play a decisive role in daily nutrition. Although consumers want to eat less sugar, they do not want to sacrifice that all important sugar-like taste and indulgence. Consumers are also beginning to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ carbohydrates, making it even more important for producers to consider the quality of the carbohydrates used, when developing game-changing food and drink products for every lifestyle and age group."

For further details and insights on the consumer research Gudrun Dold, Consumer Insights Manager, BENEEO, is available for comment.

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

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

BENEEO is a division of the Südzucker Group, employs almost 900 people and has production units in Belgium, Chile, Germany and Italy.
www.BENEEO.com

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ⁱ BENEIO conducted quantitative consumer research in five European countries (UK, Spain, Germany, France and Poland). The survey was realized in 2015 by Insites, a consumer research agency with offices in Belgium, the Netherlands, UK and the United States. The shown results are weighted average among the five countries.