

Breaking News on Food & Beverage Development - Europe

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Research adds weight to meat-free strategy

By staff reporter

10/09/2007- **More than a third of households have reduced their meat consumption in the past five years, according to a market assessment by Key Note, indicating that companies extending non-animal ingredients are catering to a growing market.**

The new report, called Vegetarian Foods, says that 35.2 per cent of respondents in a survey conducted in Great Britain in April said that, as a household, they have reduced their meat consumption.

In this context it is useful to manufacturers when their suppliers spell out the non-animal origin of their ingredients.

Some major suppliers like DSM and BASF have stepped forward with ranges that seek to cater to the gamut of dietary aberrations, being suitable for vegetarian, kosher, halal, non-GM, gluten-free, allergen-free, etc.

Importantly, Key Note points out that this is not the same as being vegetarian, but that such consumers could class themselves as *"meat reducers"*, or simply be seeking a healthier and more varied diet.

"Products are now being marketed accordingly, with labels that describe the items as 'suitable for vegetarians' or 'not just for vegetarians'," said the researchers.

Key Note also highlighted some possible reasons for the shift away from a meat-centric diet. One of the keys, it said, is meat-related food scares - such as BSE and bird flu. This seemed to be a factor taken into consideration more by women than men, and more by the over 35s than by younger respondents.

The healthy perception of the vegetarian diet is an important one, given the steep trend towards healthier eating that is sweeping Europe presently. Vegetarian products frequently carry claims of lower saturated fat content, and higher levels of dietary fibre, minerals and vitamins.

In the survey, 26.7 per cent of respondents said they consider a vegetarian diet to be generally healthier than a diet containing meat. Interestingly, though, the same statistic was not seen amongst people who actually made the switch to a full vegetarian diet.

Key Note's research was driven by the observation that the vegetarian market is continuing to grow at a rate above than of the general food market - although it did not give precise figures in its communication.

The survey was conducted on behalf of Key Note by NEMS, and involved a sample of 1003 adults aged 16 and over residing in the UK. They were asked about their own use of vegetarian and suitable for vegetarian products, and their perception of issues surrounding vegetarianism.

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