

Top 10 trends in functional foods

(MEATPOULTRY.com, April 18, 2008)

by Stephanie Bloyd

CHICAGO — As the American obesity epidemic continues and health care costs rise, more people are turning to functional foods to augment their diets. Liz Sloan, contributing editor and president of Sloan Trends and Solutions, a trending and market predictions firm focusing on the food industry, identified the top 10 trends in functional foods.

Ms. Sloan said 69% of Americans incorporate foods into a preventative lifestyle, while 27% use food as a treatment to manage a preexisting health condition. One-third of shoppers (36%) try to reduce the risk of developing a health condition, follow a doctor's advice (30%) or manage/treat a specific condition on their own (25%), according to the Food Marketing Institute data. Sloan's predictions include:

Top 10 Food Trends

1. Healthy households — Americans are looking to create a healthy household. Approximately 57% of shoppers are making an effort to eat healthier. Popular trends include DHA for brain and eye development and probiotics for digestive health.
2. Superfoods — Recent scientific validation of the health benefits of superfoods have convinced consumers that key benefits are, in fact, naturally achievable, thus creating a new trend to whole food nutrition. New superfoods include blood oranges, goji berries, seabuckthorn, mangosteens, garbanzo beans and specialty mushrooms.
3. Light, satisfying foods — The U.S. weight loss market — projected to grow from \$58 billion to \$69 billion by 2010 — is changing as consumers shift from dieting/weight loss programs to managing weight via smaller portions, specific food restrictions, and light/low-fat and super-satiating foods. Products providing, satiety, the state of feeling full or gratified, are now a hot commodity.
4. Boomer food — As 31 million Americans turn age 65 over the next 10 years, and the oldest of the 76 million baby boomers enter their 60s, the demand for condition-specific foods will skyrocket. Conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and diabetes have created a need for functional foods to manage/treat these conditions. Boomers are looking to consume more omega-3s, polyphenols, flavanols, and plant sterols as part of a balanced lifestyle.
5. Health conscious choices — With the majority of consumers trying to live a preventive lifestyle, fortified foods and beverages have quickly become a way of life. Consumers are making a strong effort to get more vitamin C, calcium, B vitamins, fiber, antioxidants, vitamin E, omega-3s/DHA/fish oil, vitamin A, potassium, iron and folic acid from the food and beverages they consume.
6. Green living — Many consumers are taking a simpler, more-natural approach to the foods they eat, looking for foods with only a few ingredients and as fresh and close to the farm as time and budget will allow. Hormones topped the list of ingredients that consumers were least comfortable consuming. Organic food and beverages sales grew 13% in 2007 and are expected to continue at double-digit growth through 2018. Consumers believe local products are fresher, have fewer pesticides, and in general are of higher quality. Whole and heritage grains are among the ingredients that best symbolize the new natural direction.
7. Smart snacking — With two-thirds (66%) of consumers trying to eat snacks with more nutrition, 63% looking for lower-calorie favorites, and one-quarter looking for 100-calorie snack packs, healthier snack

options is a "must have" for today's consumer. Healthy snack sales outpaced traditional snacks nearly 3:1 over the last few years.

8. Food allergies — The number of adults who perceive that they, or their children, suffer from food allergies, intolerances, and sensitivities continues to grow, creating lucrative markets. The 70 million Americans suffering from a digestive ailment expect to see more products fortified with fiber and gluten-free. Foods carrying a digestive health/probiotic claim reached \$712 million in 2007.

9. Fueling a fast-paced lifestyle — Energy was the top reason consumers made a dietary change last year. More than half of adults (55%) need something to give them an energy boost several times a week, 48% to increase their stamina/physical endurance, 46% to help them wake up, 43% to improve mental alertness, and 40% to keep them awake.

Of all new functional food concepts, consumers are most interested in new products that improve mental performance. Just over one-third of consumers drink energy beverages for a mental boost. Ginseng, guarana, and taurine are among the key ingredients in emerging beverages. Candies, gums, and chocolates also are gaining popularity within this market.

10. Grab & go — Without a doubt, the most important factor driving the healthy and functional foods market mainstream has been the increased accessibility of healthy products through additional channels. With today's grab-and-go lifestyle and rising gas prices, convenience stores have become a powerhouse for sales of some healthy products. Convenience stores have instituted new programs designed to increase sales of these types of products.