

A slim down for the slimming foods market

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It is that time of year again, when we all promise to lose those excess Christmas pounds and resolve to lead a virtuous life from here on in. But latest research from MINTEL finds that we are not turning to 'slimming foods'* to trim down. In fact, the market for 'slimming foods' has itself slimmed down considerably, with sales shrinking by as much as 27% in the last five years. Today, the market is worth just over Â£81 million, down from as much as Â£110 million back in 2001.

But it is meal replacements, such as milkshakes and cereal bars, which have been hit hardest and which are dragging the whole market down. Sales here have declined by as much as 64% in the last five years alone to be worth just Â£32 million, compared to Â£90 million in 2001. The future for these products looks less than rosy, with a further 46% decline in sales forecast for the next five years.

The slimming foods market has come up against stiff competition from a number of lifestyle changes. Firstly, these products are not seen to fit in with the trend of people demanding more natural food and ingredients. Indeed, MINTEL's research shows that almost two in five (39%) consumers who have not used or would not consider using slimming aids prefer more natural ways of losing weight. Along with this shift towards natural products, many Brits looking to lose weight would these days rather introduce a healthy, well-balanced diet or exercise more regularly as opposed to buying 'slimming foods', designed specifically for weight loss. When it comes to meal replacements, this sector was hard hit by the fact that many low carbohydrate meal complements were removed from the market, as the popularity of the Atkins diet faded away.

"At a time when obesity is at an all time high and the majority of the British nation are now either overweight or obese, it is surprising to find such a decline in the slimming foods market. But the market has suffered negative press with many health professionals seeing them only as a quick fix, that will not help people maintain a healthy weight in the long term. What is more, slimming aids have suffered at the hands of the mega-trend move away from artificial ingredients in food and drink products," explains Katy Child, market analyst at MINTEL.

"It would seem that the market needs to highlight the benefits of using slimming foods to kick-start weight loss in a move towards a healthier lifestyle and focus on the products' natural credentials in order to stem the decline in future sales," she adds.

Mintel's definition of slimming foods includes only those products designed specifically to help the consumer lose weight. It does not include products which, although low in calories, are promoted on a healthy platform.Â

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