Bright future for better-for-you foods

Contributed by Euromonitor International
Sunday, 31 July 2005
Last Updated Wednesday, 21 September 2011

Bright future for better-for-you foods, by Euromonitor International New dietary guidelines in the United States could boost sales of healthier foods, such as high fibre and low fat dairy products, according to global market analyst, Euromonitor International.

Media and government initiatives have raised health awareness in the United States; but despite changing attitudes towards healthy eating, there is still a marked contradiction between what Americans think they should eat and what they actually do eat. The prevalence of obesity is rising across all demographic groups in the United States and in 2004 an estimated 69% of women and 62% of men were overweight or obese.

As part of the initiative to fight the obesity epidemic in the United States, the US government has recently launched the new food pyramid. Outlining new dietary guidelines for Americans, the new pyramid encourages US consumers to make healthy food choices a part of every day life.

Boost for healthy whole grainsA key recommendation, as part of the new dietary guidelines, is to choose whole grain products more often â€“ a recommendation likely to benefit the high fibre bakery sector, according to Euromonitor International. In comparison to other Health and Wellness bakery products, such as low carbohydrate, fortified or organic products, the naturally healthy or high fibre bakery sector is the largest and most established within the US bakery products sector, accounting for 7.2% of bakery value sales in 2004.

Due to its relative maturity and greater size, however, the rate of growth for high fibre bakery products in recent years has been slower than its counterparts. Euromonitor Internationalâ€™s research shows that between 2003 and 2004, sales of high fibre bakery products experienced growth of 3.3%, to reach US$4,609 million. Low carbohydrate bakery products, on the other hand, experienced a boom over the same period, growing by a remarkable 83.6% to reach $1533 million.

Christiana Benkouider, Head of Health and Wellness research at Euromonitor International explains, "Until recently, reduced carbohydrate products have been enjoying much of the limelight in the US. But many nutritionists agree that switching to whole grain foods rather than excessively restricting carbohydrate intake is a more sensible and sustainable weight management solution. The new emphasis on whole grains has encouraged manufacturers to promote products that are high in fibre, and at Euromonitor International, we expect this renewed focus on whole grain foods to provide a boost to the sector."

Opting for low fat dairyLow fat dairy products are also being encouraged by the new dietary guidelines. While this recommendation could also have a positive impact on the sector, a potential limitation to further growth and penetration for reduced fat dairy products is the perception that dairy products are already "good" for you. Despite encouragement from the new dietary guidelines, many Americans already believe their traditional, full-fat dairy products are healthy and therefore may see little reason to switch to low fat products.

OutlookEuromonitor Internationalâ€™s research shows that the proportion of people in the United States who are overweight or obese is expected to climb, such that by 2020 as many as three-quarters of adult women and 70% of adult men could fall into this bracket. With obesity increasing the risk of a host of illnesses, the need to combat the epidemic is clear.

While specifically designed â€˜better-for-youâ€™ foods such as reduced sugar or carbohydrate have become commonplace in Americansâ€™ diets, naturally healthy foods, such as whole grains, are likely to make a comeback.

Euromonitor Internationalâ€™s "Health and Wellness Foods in the USA" is a new report that tracks the developments of health-associated product types and the healthy-option positioning of competing brands in many food product sectors. Health and wellness categories examined include: organic products, better-for-you products, naturally healthy products, functional/fortified products, and food for specific intolerances.

This report is just one in a series of reports covering the Health and Wellness Food market in 28 countries

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