

Boosting digestive health with Functional fibers

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Lifestyle habits can affect gut health



Prebiotic fibres – Inulin and Oligofructose – for a healthy gut by smart eating

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Rapid urbanisation over the recent years has taken a toll on Asia's digestive health. Easy-to-consume and highly processed foods have now become mainstays in the diets of many Asians who live fast-paced and busy lifestyles. These foods contain high amounts of saturated fat and sugar and are typically low in fibre. An important element to move the digestion along, a lack of fibre in the diet can lead to irregular bowel movements and constipation.

It is little surprise then that digestive discomfort, which includes symptoms like constipation and bloating, is a common problem in Asia, a continent in which Inflammatory Bowel Disease is also on the rise.

Gut health is essential for our overall health, as the small and large intestines help our body absorb the nutrients it needs to run smoothly. Studies have linked the lack of dietary fibre intake to health issues like obesity, high blood pressure and heart disease. Although health authorities recommend a daily fibre intake of about 25g for adults, many consumers only manage to take in about half of what is required.

As the pace of life in Asia continues to accelerate, there is an opportunity for food manufacturers to cater to people's hectic lifestyles while maintaining a healthy gut by increasing the fibre content of food products.

Helping consumers eat smarter

An increasing number of manufacturers have been boosting the fibre content of their food products using functional fibres. This helps consumers increase fibre intake without the need for major dietary adjustments. Prebiotic fibres like inulin and oligofructose go one step further as they can restore the balance of our intestinal flora by stimulating beneficial bifidobacteria growth. Thus, they naturally support a healthy and balanced digestive system – an important fact for all age groups including the elderly, young children and infants.

BENEO's Orafiti® Inulin and Orafiti® Oligofructose, for instance, are of 100% vegetable origin since they are derived from the chicory root. In fact, inulin and oligofructose are the only existing prebiotics derived from herbal sources. The prebiotic fermentation of inulin and oligofructose leads to the production of short-chain fatty acids in our large intestine, which help to stimulate bowel movements in a mild and natural manner. This beneficial effect has been acknowledged by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), whose positive evaluation leads to an exclusive health claim for BENEO's Orafiti® Inulin in the promotion of digestive health.

Easily incorporated into many popular products including baked goods, dairy products and cereal bars, these natural and soluble prebiotic fibres can also be used to make healthier versions of easy-to-consume products that busy citizens take regularly. With a mild and pleasant taste, oligofructose can be used to reduce sucrose in food and beverages, while providing all the nutritional benefits of fibre, at just half the calories of sugar. Being soluble, inulin and oligofructose maintain the texture and mouthfeel of products while avoiding a grainy and bland taste. Even better, inulin's fat mimicking properties can be used to replace part of the fat content in foods, thus creating healthier products while preserving desired textures and tastes.

A healthy life from the inside out

Consumers today long for tasty, easy-to-consume foods that can simultaneously bring proven health benefits. Prebiotic fibres offer manufacturers the flexibility to enhance the fibre content in their food products without major changes in their formulation. At the same time, they deliver a host of nutritional benefits. Manufacturers who apply Orafiti® Inulin and Oligofructose in their recipes can confidently market their products with scientifically proven health benefits that are in line with their customers' demands for better nutrition.