

Why Food Manufacturers are Turning to Natural Preservation Systems

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As consumer demand for clean-label, minimally processed, and naturally functional foods accelerates, ingredient innovators are redefining how the food industry approaches formulation, preservation, and nutrition. Regulatory shifts across global markets, growing scrutiny of synthetic additives, and the rise of wellness-driven consumption are pushing manufacturers to seek sustainable, science-backed alternatives that deliver both performance and transparency.

In this interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Simon Claessens, Director Global Business Development at Prosur, discusses how the company's Get It Natural Toolbox is helping food and beverage manufacturers transition toward natural ingredient systems powered by fermentation, upcycling, plant-based functionality, and AI-driven innovation. From tackling ultra-processed food concerns to enabling cost-effective clean-label solutions across beverages, dairy alternatives, bakery, and functional foods, Claessens shares Prosur's vision for the future of sustainable food manufacturing and the evolving role of circular food systems in shaping next-generation nutrition.

What inspired Prosur to develop the Get It Natural Toolbox, and what key industry challenges is it designed to address?

Prosur's ethos is simple: protecting food with food. Our Get It Natural Toolbox is a comprehensive portfolio of natural ingredient solutions designed to eliminate unwanted chemicals from food and beverages. It harnesses the intrinsic functional and nutritional potential of plants, fruits and spices through pioneering advances in flavour systems, fermentation, natural antimicrobial systems, polyphenol-rich extracts and AI-enhanced formulation tools.

These solutions address key challenges facing the industry today. These include the growing pressure to drop unwanted chemical additives, achieve clean labels with fewer ingredients, reduce refined sugar use, support gut health and meet consumer demand for healthier snacks without compromising on taste.

With growing global scrutiny around ultra-processed foods and synthetic additives, how do you see consumer expectations shaping the future of natural ingredient innovation?

Global consumers are increasingly looking for natural ingredients that are transparent, authentic and aligned with their wellness goals. All-natural positioning and preservative-free claims are key drivers, with consumers valuing the impact of their food choices on their health, sustainability and food waste now more than ever. The industry needs science-backed, effective and future-proof solutions to rapidly turn these expectations into a scalable reality – and this is what our Get It Natural Toolbox delivers.

How does the Get It Natural Toolbox help manufacturers balance clean-label requirements with critical product performance attributes such as shelf life, texture, taste, and cost efficiency?

At Prosur, we prefer to talk about a clear label because our solutions go beyond a simple clean-label declaration. They offer sustainable, natural ingredients that consumers are familiar with – ingredients that enhance flavour, colour, freshness and food safety without increasing manufacturers' costs. Our next-level fermentation of upcycled superfoods, for example, helps products remain naturally stable by creating internal conditions where spoilage microorganisms struggle to grow. Instead of relying on chemical preservatives, this approach works from within the recipe, using natural ingredients that deliver advanced microbial stability in all food matrices.

Regulatory shifts, such as the MAHA initiative in the US and tighter additive restrictions in Europe, are accelerating change. How is Prosur helping food manufacturers stay ahead of these evolving compliance demands?

The food industry is currently undergoing a fundamental transition at a global level. In the US, for instance, MAHA has turned once-acceptable ingredients into liabilities – from high-intensity sweeteners and high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) to synthetic dyes and preservatives such as benzoate, BHA and BHT. There is also a sharpening focus on ultra-processed foods, driven by federal signals, state-level action, retailer mandates and no-go lists. Meanwhile, in Europe, restrictions are tightening on the use of additives such as nitrites and nitrates.

This dynamic is forcing companies to question their models in a rapidly changing landscape where taking action is a necessity, not an option. Our Get It Natural solutions help manufacturers future-proof against these evolving compliance demands with flavour, colour and preservation systems while maintaining – or enhancing – product performance, margins and shelf presence.

The toolbox incorporates upcycled ingredients, fermentation, and AI-driven innovation. How important is sustainability in Prosur's product development strategy, and what role do circular food systems play in the future of food manufacturing?

Zero-waste philosophy is in our DNA, and the circular economy is central to our mission. Food upcycling is a core part of our approach, allowing us to transform agro-industrial byproducts into valuable food solutions. This sustainability ethos also extends to our state-of-the-art production facility in Murcia, Spain, which is powered by solar energy.

Looking ahead, what opportunities do you see for natural ingredient solutions across categories beyond processed meats, particularly in beverages, dairy alternatives, and functional foods?

In 2015, we revolutionised meat processing by introducing the world's first commercial nitrite elimination system. We now offer cost-effective solutions across all food and beverage categories that meet consumer demand for natural ingredients.

In a more health-aware food culture, the boundary between specialised nutrition and everyday food and drink has blurred, with functionality being about how products behave after consumption. The focus in bakery, for example, is shifting from isolated bioactives to coherent, holistic solutions that extend their impact across glucose handling, inflammation and the gut environment. Ingredients that naturally contain polyphenols or fermentation-derived components are gaining traction because they work across digestion, metabolism and time, rather than targeting a single effect.

Our cost-effective cocoa alternative is a soluble fibre upcycled from Mediterranean carob, delivering formulation benefits beyond mass and texture. Metabolically active and technically versatile, it is ideal for digestion-friendly and energy-conscious applications, including innovative beverages. Meanwhile, our smarter sweeteners deliver D-pinitol alongside polyphenols to help manage blood sugar – no spikes, no cravings, just clean functional sweetness for real-world applications such as dairy alternatives.

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