NFFOODS Spectrum
perspectives on food technologies & business
ASIA

Probi Explores the Growing Role of Clinical Science in Asia-Pacificâ??s Gut Health Market

24 July 2026 | Interviews | By Shraddha Warde| shraddha.warde@mmactiv.com

It provides a powerful storytelling tool for brands by enabling clear, compelling communication through regulatory channels, on-pack messaging, and consumer education



Amy Lau, Marketing Manager, APAC, Probi

As consumers across Asia-Pacific increasingly turn to science-backed solutions for digestive and holistic wellness, the probiotic industry is moving towards more targeted, population-specific and clinically validated innovations. Japan, with its highly informed consumers and strong culture of functional foods and fermented products, remains a key market for this evolution.

In this interview, Amy Lau, Marketing Manager, APAC, Probi, discusses the significance of the first clinical study of LP299V in Japanese adults, and how population-specific evidence can strengthen consumer trust, regulatory relevance and product adoption. She also elaborates on the strain's mechanisms of action, including its role in supporting gut barrier integrity, modulating the microbiome and promoting an environment favourable to beneficial, butyrate-producing bacteria.

Lau further discusses the partnership between Probi and Nomura Dairy Products, the growing demand for multifunctional biotics and convenient fermented beverage formats, and the evolving opportunities for probiotic innovation across Japan and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

What makesâ?¯thisâ?¯firstâ?¯clinicalâ?¯studyâ?¯ofâ?¯LP299V in Japanese adults particularly significant for Probiâ?¯and theâ?¯broaderâ?¯probioticâ?¯industry?â?¯

Population-specific clinical validation is extremely important in a market like Japan, where consumers are highly educated and place strong trust in science-backed claims. From a commercial and marketing perspective, local clinical data can assist in translating global efficacy data so that it feels directly relevant and credible to the target audience, building purchasing confidence and long-term brand trust.â?¯

It provides a powerful storytelling tool for brands by enabling clear, compelling communication through regulatory channels, on-pack messaging, and consumer education. By demonstratingâ?¯that the product has been tested within the same demographic context, it supports faster product adoption and strengthens premium positioning. For consumers in Japan who are willing to pay more for scientificallyâ?¯validated, locally relevant health solutions, this is an important differentiator.

The Japanese functional food market is highly science driven. How important is population-specific clinical validation in strengthening consumer trust and product adoption in markets like Japan?

From a commercial and marketing perspective, local clinical data helps translate global efficacy into something that feels directly relevant and credible to the target audience. It reduces the perceived gap between “international research” and “my daily health,” which is a key driver of purchase confidence and long-term brand trust.

In addition, population-specific studies provide a powerful storytelling tool for brands. They enable clearer, more compelling communication—whether through regulatory channels, on-pack messaging, or consumer education—by demonstrating that the product has been tested within the same demographic context. This not only supports faster product adoption but also strengthens premium positioning, as consumers in Japan are often willing to pay more for scientifically validated, locally relevant health solutions.

From a commercial and marketing perspective, local clinical data helps translate global efficacy into something that feels directly relevant and credible to the target audience. It reduces the perceived gap between international research and ‘My Daily Health’, which is a key driver of purchase confidence and long-term brand trust.

In addition, population-specific studies provide a powerful storytelling tool for brands. They enable clearer, more compelling communication, whether through regulatory channels, on-pack messaging, or consumer education, by demonstrating that the product has been tested within the same demographic context. This not only supports faster product adoption but also strengthens premium positioning, as consumers in Japan are often willing to pay more for scientifically validated, locally relevant health solutions.

Couldâ?¯youâ?¯elaborateâ?¯on theâ?¯mechanismsâ?¯throughâ?¯whichâ?¯LP299V supports gutâ?¯health,â?¯particularlyâ?¯itsâ?¯roleâ?¯inâ?¯modulatingâ?¯theâ?¯microbiomeâ?¯andâ?¯promotingâ?¯butyrate-producingâ?¯bacteria?â?¯

LP299V exerts several beneficialâ?¯effects in theâ?¯gut through complementary mechanisms targeting gut barrier function, intestinal microbialâ?¯balance,â?¯and inflammation.â?¯â?¯

Adherence to epithelial cells:â?¯The first and key step in LP299V’s mechanism of action is its ability to attach to the intestinal epithelial cells via a unique mannose-binding mechanism as well as to the mucosal layer by electrostatic and hydrophobic interactions.â?¯â?¯

Mucus production:â?¯LP299V has been shown to promote mucin production, strengthening the first line of defense against pathogens in the intestinal lumen.â?¯â?¯

Pathogen inhibition:â?¯As well as increasing mucin production, LP299V can competitively exclude pathogenic bacteria by occupying binding sites on the intestinal cells. LP299V produces lactic acid that serves as a precursor to short-chain fatty acidsâ?¯(e.g.â?¯butyrate)â?¯and reduces intestinal pH to create an environment favoring the growth of beneficial bacteria.â?¯â?¯

Strengthening intestinal barrier integrity:â?¯LP299V indirectly increases short-chain fatty acids, which serve as energy for the intestinal cells, as well as lowering theâ?¯pH. It has also been shown to enhance tight junction integrity and increase transcription levels of the tight junction protein,â?¯occludin.â?¯

Reducing inflammation:â?¯LP299V has been shown in several animal studies to have anti-inflammatory properties. In clinical trials, it has shown a reduction in levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines, IL-6, IL-8, and IL-12.â?¯â?¯

Increasing microbial diversity:â?¯LP299V has been shown to affect overall microbiota composition and increase diversity.

Howâ?¯doesâ?¯the partnershipâ?¯betweenâ?¯Probiâ?¯and Nomuraâ?¯Dairyâ?¯Productsâ?¯helpâ?¯bridge global probiotic scienceâ?¯withâ?¯localâ?¯consumerâ?¯preferencesâ?¯andâ?¯productâ?¯innovation?â?¯â?¯

This partnership brings together complementary strengths that connect global probiotic science with local market needs.â?¯Probiâ?¯contributes a portfolio of clinically documented strains backed by robust research, while Nomura offers deepâ?¯expertiseâ?¯in Japanese consumer preferences, particularly in dairy and beverage applications.

This combination allows us to translate scientific efficacy into products that resonate with local tastes, habits, and daily consumption formats.â?¯Importantly, Nomura has also conducted clinical studies in the Japanese population, helping to furtherâ?¯validateâ?¯the relevance of probiotic benefits within a local context.â?¯

Through this collaboration, weâ?¯can now co-develop solutions that balance proven health benefits with product experience to ensure stability, taste, and convenience, but withoutâ?¯compromisingâ?¯clinical credibility.

The partnership also enables faster innovation tailored to the Japanese marketâ?¯and demonstratesâ?¯how global science can be successfully adapted into locally relevant, differentiated products that meet growing consumer expectations around gut health.â?¯

â?¯As digestive wellness remains a major global focus, what emerging trends are you seeing in probiotic innovation and consumer demand across the Asia-Pacific region?

Digestive wellness continues to be a central driver of probiotic innovation across APAC. What is evolving is how consumers understand and engage with it.

According to Innova Market Insights, gut health is now one of the top global F&B trends for 2026, withâ?¯nearly 60 per centâ?¯of consumers actively seeking functional ingredients like probiotics to support not only digestion but broader benefits such as immunity and mental well-being.

In APAC specifically, consumers are proactive about preventive health, shifting from symptom-based solutions to daily management of overallâ?¯wellness. This is fueling sustained demand for microbiome-based products.â?¯[Innova market insights]â?¯

We also continue to see three key innovation trends. First, a clear move toward multi-functional and next-generation biotics, including postbiotics andâ?¯synbiotics, which extend benefits beyond digestion into areas like stress, sleep, and healthy aging.â?¯â?¯

Secondly, formats are diversifying rapidly, from traditional supplements to functional foods and beverages, including ready-to-drink products,â?¯snacksâ?¯and gummies, making probiotics more accessible for daily consumption. Lastly, personalization is gaining traction, as both Innova and broaderâ?¯industry data highlight growing consumer interest inâ?¯targeted, life-stage or need-based solutions.â?¯â?¯
From a consumer perspective, FMCG Gurus data shows that awareness of probiotics in Asia is alreadyâ?¯very high, with over 80 per cent of consumers familiar with the category and a growing proportion incorporating them into everyday routines.

Consumer expectations are also expanding beyond digestive health into holistic benefits such as immunity, skin health,â?¯energy, heartâ?¯healthâ?¯and even mental well-being to reflect a more integrated view of health. Convenience,â?¯tasteâ?¯and product experience are now key purchase drivers, particularly among younger consumers.â?¯â?¯

Overall, the opportunity in APAC lies in moving beyond gut health as a single benefit toward holistic, science-backed, andâ?¯lifestyle-friendlyâ?¯solutions. Brands that can combine strong clinical evidence with appealing formats and clearly communicate benefits are in a good position to capture the next phase of growth in this region.â?¯â?¯

LP299V has been studied extensively. How do these latest findings expand the commercial and scientific opportunities for the strain in future product development?

These latest findings mark a significant milestoneâ¯in LP299V.â¯Probi was born out of a research project at Lund University, Sweden,â¯involvingâ¯LP299V inâ¯hospitalized patientsâ¯in the 1980s.â¯

Decadesâ¯of research followed, focusing primarily onâ¯individuals withâ¯a compromised gastrointestinal (GI)l system, with many of the clinical trials involving individuals with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).â¯In these individuals,â¯LP299Vâ¯wasâ¯shownâ¯to significantly improve bowel disturbances, abdominal pain and bloating, and overall quality of life.â¯

With the newest Japanese study, we add to the growing evidenceâ¯that LP299Vâ¯benefitsâ¯not just individuals with GI conditions but also those who are healthy.â¯

This human trial,â¯following a gold-standard studyâ¯design,â¯demonstratedâ¯that this strain can significantlyâ¯reduceâ¯bowel frequencyâ¯in otherwise healthy individuals who experience loose stools.â¯This opens aâ¯new consumer segment for LP299V by providing clinical evidence of efficacy forâ¯theâ¯average, health-seeking consumer whoâ¯doesn'tâ¯necessarily have an underlying diagnosis but stillâ¯wishes to improve their GI functionâ¯via scientifically proven, clinical interventions.â¯

There is an increased demand for studies in healthy individuals to meet evolving regulatory complianceâ¯standards, and regulatorsâ¯are mandating one or more human trials in healthy individuals to make general health-supporting claims.

It is no longer sufficient to only rely on evidenceâ¯stemming from studies involving a diseased population. With this new study involvingâ¯healthyâ¯individuals, LP299V is ideally positionedâ¯forâ¯smoother regulatory recognition andâ¯rapidâ¯expansion acrossâ¯diverse markets.â¯

On the whole, this new study advances the field of bioticsâ¯byâ¯invitingâ¯additionalâ¯research into LP299V in healthy individuals and opens commercial opportunities by creating relevance to the everyday consumer.â¯

Howâ¯doâ¯youâ¯seeâ¯theâ¯fermentedâ¯functionalâ¯beverageâ¯categoryâ¯evolvingâ¯in Japan andâ¯otherâ¯Asianâ¯markets over theâ¯nextâ¯fewâ¯years?â¯

The fermented functional beverageâ¯category is set to grow steadily in Japan and across Asia, supported by strong consumer awareness of gut health and a long-standing cultural acceptance of fermented products.

Japanâ¯remainsâ¯a highly mature market, where probiotic drinks are already part of daily routines and supported by stringent frameworks like Food for Specified Health Uses (FOSHU).

Looking ahead,â¯growthâ¯will be driven by a combination of format innovation and more selective premiumization. While traditional dairy-based probiotic drinks continue to dominate, newer segments such as kombucha and plant-based fermented beverages are expanding rapidly, with kombucha in APAC projected to grow at double-digit rates. At the same time, consumers are becoming more value-conscious, so premium products need to be clearly justified through scientific validation, tangible benefits, and quality positioning.â¯â¯

Another key trend is toward multi-functional and lifestyle-oriented solutions. Consumersâ¯are no longer looking at digestive health in isolation but as part of holistic well-being, driving demand for products that support mental wellness and overall vitality. This is accelerating innovation in clean-label, convenient, and everyday formats, making fermented functional beverages moreâ¯accessibleâ¯and relevant across different consumption occasions.â¯â¯