

Food Intolerance Management: How Data-Driven Nutrition Is Creating New Product Categories

27 July 2026 | Features | By Max Kushnir, Co-founder & Chief Science Officer, Sova

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Think about the last time you blamed a food for how you felt. Maybe it was the dahi at lunch, so you skipped it for a week. Then it was the wheat, so you switched to millet rotis. Then it was dairy altogether, so you started ordering black coffee instead of chai. Most of us have run this exact

experiment, cutting one food, then another, then another, without ever getting a real answer for what was actually happening inside our gut. We've all become amateur nutritionists by trial and error, and most of us are still wrong.

That instinct isn't irrational. It's the beginning of something the science is finally catching up to: elimination diets are no longer a fad; they're a diagnostic starting point. The question the food industry is now asking is simple: what if that trial and error had data behind it?

From guesswork to diagnosis

For decades, "cutting out" a food group was a lifestyle decision dressed up as health advice, and the language reflected it: people said "allergy" and "intolerance" almost interchangeably, as if reacting badly to a food meant the same thing regardless of why. Today the picture is shifting into something more clinical, and that starts by pulling those two terms apart. **An allergy and an intolerance are not the same thing.** An allergy is an immune response, and it can be severe. An intolerance is simply your gut's inability to properly break down a food, usually because of enzyme gaps or an imbalanced microbiome. Intolerances, unlike allergies, can be reversed. They're not a life sentence of avoidance.

Getting that distinction right is what's made a real diagnosis possible in the first place. At-home stool-based microbiome panels and food intolerance screens have turned elimination diets from a blunt instrument into a structured, data-led protocol: identify the trigger first, then eliminate it, rather than eliminating everything and hoping for the best.

This shift matters enormously in India, where digestive discomfort is often normalized rather than investigated. Lactose intolerance is estimated to be much higher in South Indians affecting about 66.6 per cent of the population, while the numbers for North Indians is just 27.4 per cent, a striking regional variation most people are never told about. Meanwhile, community studies estimate irritable bowel syndrome affects a significant portion of the Indian population, yet only a few of them with symptoms ever seek medical care. That indicates a vast, largely undiagnosed population quietly restricting foods without knowing why.

It's the gap we built Sova to close. Our Gut Microbiome Test and Food Intolerance Test exist for exactly this reason. Rather than just flagging a food as "reactive," **Sova's Food Intolerance Test is one of the first tests built to address the digestive gap directly**, it maps what a person's own gut microbiome can and cannot digest. So the report reflects their actual digestive capacity, not a generic checklist. And because **these intolerances can largely be reversed**, a test result is only the starting point. A person gets time with real gut health experts at Sova who translate the report into specific diet and lifestyle recommendations, what to reintroduce, when, and in what order backed by structured nutrition programs built around targeted probiotics and dietary protocols that recondition the microbiome over weeks, not generic advice to avoid a food forever.

The market is already voting

Consumer demand has moved faster than clinical awareness, and the numbers show it. The global gluten-free products market was valued at roughly \$8.5 billion in 2025 and is projected to nearly double to \$18.3 billion by 2033. What's notable is who's driving that growth: Asia Pacific is now the fastest-growing region globally for gluten-free products, even as the category has moved out of the "free-from" category and into mainstream grocery shelves alongside regular bakery products. The gluten-free products market in the Asia Pacific is expected to grow at a significant CAGR of 11.2 per cent from 2026 to 2033.

The same pattern is playing out in low-FODMAP foods, a category once known only to gastroenterologists. The global low-FODMAP foods market is projected to grow from under \$7 billion in 2024 to over \$16 billion by 2034, and nearly 70 per cent of that demand already comes from everyday household consumers, not just people with a formal IBS diagnosis. Clinical trial data backs the enthusiasm: around 70 per cent of IBS patients report a meaningful drop in symptoms on a low-FODMAP diet, with 80 per cent seeing a significant improvement in symptom severity scores after just six weeks (Market.us).

Lactose-free products are following a similar arc, particularly relevant given how widespread intolerance is across South Asia. This isn't a Western wellness trend arriving late to India; if anything, the underlying biology makes India one of the more legitimate markets for it.

Where AI and testing kits come in

The bottleneck was never consumer willingness. It was access to a diagnosis simple enough that people would actually act on it. That's where technology has changed the equation.

Personalised nutrition platforms, powered by microbiome sequencing, at-home test kits, and AI-driven pattern recognition, are compressing what used to be a months-long process of expensive clinic visits and food diaries into a single test and a data-backed report. The Global Personalised Nutrition Market was valued at \$15.7 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach \$33.1 billion by 2030, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 11.2 per cent, positioning it among the fastest-growing segments in preventive healthcare. This market expansion is driven by the convergence of nutrigenomics, microbiome science, artificial intelligence, wearable diagnostics, and digital health platforms, shifting consumer behaviour away from generic diets toward precision-based, outcome-driven nutrition solutions.

AI's specific contribution is speed and pattern matching: taking a person's test results, symptom history, and dietary patterns and surfacing correlations no human nutritionist could realistically cross-reference by hand. This is precisely the layer we're building into Sova IQ, an ongoing, adaptive read on a person's gut rather than a one-time verdict, so the guidance updates as their diet and symptoms change.

A new category, not just a new diet

What's actually happening here is bigger than a trend in gluten-free biscuits or lactose-free milk. Food intolerance management is becoming its own product category. Managing food intolerances is no longer just about buying "free-from" products; it's becoming a massive new category that combines diagnostics, food science, and corrective supplementation with enzymes or probiotics.

The future winners won't just tell you what to avoid; they will connect testing with data and ongoing guidance so people truly understand their own gut health. That is exactly what we are building Sova to do.

For too long, people have just quietly lived with digestive discomfort. It is time to shift from guessing to knowing, and the data is finally backing up what our stomachs have been telling us all along.