



## FUNCTIONAL FOODS ROUNDUP

*High protein items and fat reducing bananas are some of the trends and products hitting the market.*

Words by Ranjan Sharma

### High protein products draw interest

In the past few months consumer products with high protein claims have shown a significant growth. Protein is an essential nutrient required for the growth and development of the human body. The recommended daily intake of protein is 0.8g per kilogram of body weight per day (g/kg/day), i.e. a person with 60 kg weight needs a minimum 48g of protein per day. Physically active individuals require significantly more protein than those with sedentary lifestyles, with up to 2.0 g/kg/day recommended (120g for a 60kg person).

A survey conducted by Datamonitor in 2011 showed that nearly 43 percent of US consumer food and drinks choices are influenced by claims of "high" or "very high" protein on labels. Global Industry Analysts (GIA) believe that a growing health-conscious population, coupled with scientific developments and rising middle class income levels, could drive

the total market for protein ingredients market to \$27.6 billion by 2018.

The market for high protein ingredients such as whey protein has largely been driven by the sports nutrition market, although protein ingredients such as those from soy and field peas are also gaining popularity. According to Euromonitor, protein supplements have long been the core of sports nutrition, with the global sales of protein-based sports nutrition products reaching \$5.4 billion in 2011.

Although the sports market has been the biggest driver of the protein market, the latest figures from Euromonitor suggest that the non-sports aspect of the market is showing a healthy growth, with market value reaching \$1.6 billion in 2011.

One of the key elements behind the growth has been targeting the weight control market through the satiety effect of high protein products. Recent examples include Greek-style yogurts and yogurts fortified with protein.

Although the target market for these

products is women who want to lose weight, they are also popular with men and children.

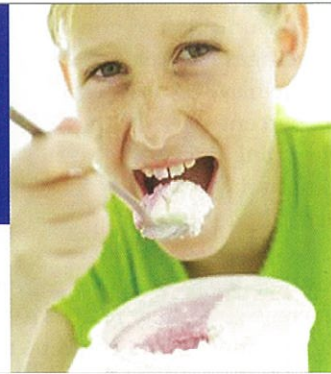
For example, in the "tween" market, Yoplait Proforce claims to contain double the amount of protein found in the normal yogurt. It comes in flavours suitable for young 'tweens.

The importance of protein fortification of yogurts, especially Greek-style, without the need for whey drainage has been recognised by Arla Food Ingredients who recently introduced Nutrilac functional milk proteins. According to Arla Foods, Nutrilac allows manufacturers of standard yoghurt to add a Greek-style product to their production line without the need for additional equipment or technology yet resulting in a high protein product. By all indicators, growth in high protein products seems sustainable and likely to lead to the introduction of many more products with "high protein" label claims.



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## Innovations

A number of new products that have been launched in the past few months are being marketed on health and nutrition platforms. The following are a few examples.

### Muscle Milk Evolve

With a focus on high protein, Muscle Milk Evolve was launched in US earlier this year. The beverage is specially formulated for women who are active and want to reduce body fat. The product contains 12 grams of protein, 20 vitamins and minerals, 5g fibre and is sweetened with stevia, monk fruit and cane sugar. To help reduce fat, Muscle Milk Evolve contains Tonalin CLA, a plant phytosterol marketed by BASF. CLA (Conjugated Linoleic Acid) is a polyunsaturated, conjugated fatty acid that is a natural part of the human diet, found mainly in meat and dairy products.

The product is probably one of the few products in a drinkable form that specifically addresses women's need for high protein. Previous high protein products for the female market have largely been confined to cereal bars and breakfast cereals. The product is also marketed as dairy- and gluten-free.

### Osteum for bone health

Bone health remains a concern for the whole population as the consumption of natural calcium products such as milk is declining. Calcium plays an important role in children, helping guarantee a high peak bone mass, and in adults to help prevent and treat the risk of bone diseases such as osteoporosis.

According to Osteoporosis Australia, over one million Australians have osteoporosis. An ageing population, increasing obesity and changing lifestyles are the main reasons for this trend. Osteoporosis occurs when bones lose minerals, such as calcium, more quickly than the body can replace them, leading to a loss of bone thickness (bone density or mass).

In response, French company Ingredia Nutritional has developed a milk-calcium based ingredient called Osteum. According to Ingredia, Osteum is a 100 per cent natural solution that helps reinforce and preserve bone health by acting on the bone's entire life cycle. Ingredia has backed its health claims with clinical trials carried out at INRA Paris which showed that Osteum was able to decrease bone degradation by enabling mineralisation through the stimulation of osteoblast activity, the cells responsible of bone formation and mineralisation. Ingredia claims that Osteum contains native micellar calcium derived from fresh milk and therefore has a bioavailable form of calcium. If the claims hold up, this would be a welcome ingredient for foods and beverages by the food industry.

### Fat-fighting bananas

Monsanto has launched a genetically-modified banana, called Banana Plus, aimed at the image conscious consumer. According to Monsanto, Banana Plus flushes away bum and belly fat, allowing weight losses of up to 20 pounds a week. Banana Plus also claims to whiten teeth better than any toothpaste on the market.



This bold innovation is part of Monsanto's aggressive new marketing plan to stop being defensive about its negative GM image and to focus on products that benefit from using genetic materials and advances. It will be interesting to see if consumers ignore the gene modification process behind the banana if the claimed benefits of weight reduction are verified. Although Banana Plus is likely to receive strong opposition from European farmers, it remains to be seen if Australian farmers will see this as an opportunity. ☺

*Ranjan Sharma is the editor of Functional Food Weekly, [www.functionalfoods.biz](http://www.functionalfoods.biz).*

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