



## FUNCTIONAL FOODS ROUNDUP

*Breakfast on the go and salt reduction are two key areas for new product development.*

Words by Ranjan Sharma

### Competition in marketing liquid breakfast

Australia's liquid breakfast market is heating up with the recent launches of several new products. The sector is responding to trends showing that as consumers continue to lead busy lives they are looking for convenient, portable and healthy options for breakfast.

The portable breakfast concept was first introduced in the US in 2005 by Kellogg's, with the launch of Drink'n Crunch. The product had an innovative double-cup system, which kept the cereal and milk separated until they reached the consumer's mouth – allowing maximum crunch. However, the initial concept was too pricey when compared with boxed cereals and fell out of favour with consumers. Undaunted, companies such as Kellogg's and General Mills have continued to launch new products into the US market.

In Australia, the market for liquid breakfasts has been dominated (more than 90 per cent market share) by Sanitarium's Up & Go. The success of Up & Go has led to the increase of breakfast drinks from four per cent in 2008 to nearly eight per cent in 2013 according to Roy Morgan Research. According to these findings, Australians under the age of 25 were the main drivers of the growth, while 35-49 year-old Australians also were developing a taste for drinking their breakfast. The success of the Sanitarium product has attracted competition from several FMCG

companies such as Lion Dairy, Murray Goulburn and Kellogg's in Australia. These products are offered in 250 mL Tetra Brik with some containing small amount of grain flours in addition to the vegetable fibre inulin. Although Lion has offered products both in soy (Vita Go) and dairy (Oats Express), Murray Goulburn has made a point of difference by stating that their products are made with "real milk not soy".



Recent studies have shown that regular eating of cereal for breakfast is linked to healthy weight for children; this could be another market for liquid breakfast as long as the products meet their "taste test". As big players such as Quaker Oats (PepsiCo) are committing to "drinkify" snack and meals, it is likely that drinkable new products will continue in the market, offering convenience, health and nutrition on-the-go.

The big challenge is surviving in the long term as 80 per cent of new products fail within five years of their launch. It is likely that breakfast cereal makers such as Kellogg's may have an edge as they already have established breakfast brands embedded in consumers' minds. However, unique marketing efforts such as launching products through school programmes and increased advertising efforts could help secure a reasonable market share for new players in the market. Product differentiation could also be introduced through nutrition and health claims.

### Sodium reduction on the radar

Following a lower salt diet helps reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. However, the average modern diet provides excessive amounts of salt, from early childhood through adulthood. Consumer advocate, Choice Australia recently slammed the food industry for high salt levels in snacks and breakfast cereal that target youth and has called for tougher action towards change. Choice cited a review of 240 children-targeted products using data from The George Institute for Global Health which found that 20 per cent of products were high in salt while almost 60 per cent contained medium levels of salt. Although no salt regulations seem to be in the pipeline for Australia, a voluntary code of conduct for salt levels cannot be ruled out in the near future.

Reducing the salt content in food products is not a straightforward



process as salt plays an important role in the taste and the shelf life of many products. However, a number of strategies are being employed across the industry including the launch of new products with reduced salt levels. A low-salt Cheddar cheese was recently launched by UK supermarket Tesco. According to the manufacturer of the cheese, Joseph Heler, the product contains 30 per cent less salt than standard Cheddar. Thus far consumers have given a “thumbs up” for the product’s taste and texture.

According to recent studies, reducing dietary intake of sodium and boosting levels of potassium could prevent millions of deaths from heart disease and stroke worldwide each year. AkzoNobel, one of the largest suppliers of salt-based ingredients has recently teamed up with Givaudan, a leading global flavour and fragrance company, to address the challenges of sodium reduction for processed meat. The new ingredient, Suprasel OneGrain TS-M100, looks, tastes, flows, blends and dissolves in the same way as regular salt but contains less sodium than normal salt.

Based on AkzoNobel’s OneGrain technology, the new product combines salt, potassium chloride and flavour in each single grain, ensuring the same processing and storage properties as regular salt. According to the company, the new ingredient can help meat manufacturers reduce sodium by up to 40 per cent.


UK research organisation Campden BRI has suggested reducing the amount of salt by stealth, the gradual reduction of salt in processed foods over an extended period of time to avoid detection by the consumer, as an option for sodium reduction. This approach however, has not been hugely successful, which means that manufacturers need to come up with other innovative techniques and formulations that can lead to salt reduction in food. ●

*Ranjan Sharma is the editor of Functional Food Weekly  
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#### References:

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“Reducing salt and increasing potassium will have major global health benefits”, press release, BMJ 4 April 2013.



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