



The food and health industry is rapidly changing, and many analysts are making their predictions for the trends that will dominate the food industry in 2015.

Whilst these predictions vary dramatically across the board, one trend that crops up time and time again is the **health drive towards reducing calorie intake**, especially from sugar. This health drive seems set to continue for a long time, as maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle remains high on the public health agenda.

Despite a desire to reduce calorie intake, there is still a demand for sweetened food and drink products, suggesting an increased role for zero-calorie sweeteners in 2015 as further manufacturers are expected to adopt plant-based sweeteners into their products.

In 2012 the Truvia business kick started the trend in the UK by launching the first ever stevia based sweetener, a new category of sweetener offering calorie-free sweetness from a leaf. The introduction of stevia to the market was a significant breakthrough at a time of growing health concerns over obesity and diabetes. It was seen as the perfect answer to consumers' desire for sweet tasting foods and beverages without the calories, and is derived from a natural plant source, which many consumers prefer to artificial alternatives. Since its introduction to the UK market three years ago, stevia is now worth over £4m and is growing at a rate of 18% year on year; **it is the only area of sweeteners showing growth**. Sales of the Truvia brand continue to grow at the rapid rate of 44% year on year. Furthermore Truvia sweetener is now sold in eight markets worldwide and remains the number one household stevia sweetener globally.

While the value of stevia as an additive for use in food and beverage manufacture totalled \$110 million in 2013, Mintel and Leatherhead Food Research forecasts this to grow to \$275 million by 2017. They comment: "Post EU regulations, improved tastes and textures and increased consumer buy in and demand, stevia has been quietly gaining traction with consumers – and

alongside that, usurping the traditional pecking order of more established sweeteners.” Healthcare professionals and consumers alike are acknowledging the benefits of stevia and appreciate its natural plant origin.

This is increasingly important as obesity continues to rise and cause significant health problems for many adults and children across Europe. Simple tweaks to the diet can make a significant difference. For example, **zero and low-calorie sweeteners can play a useful role as part of a healthy, balanced diet as they can help patients to control their calorie intake**

. Research has shown that overweight patients consuming sweet foods are more likely to stick to their diets with the use of zero and low-calorie sweeteners in the initial phase following weight loss,. In addition, research has shown that the consumption of zero-calorie sweeteners neither stimulates the appetite nor results in increased food intake,. Stevia also has the potential to help alleviate the global burden of diabetes as people with Type 2 diabetes may find zero and low-calorie sweeteners useful in helping to manage the calories and carbohydrates in their diet. People with diabetes can safely consume stevia-based products and they have no effect on the glycaemic index,. Over the past few months the UK has seen an expansion in the number of food manufacturers offering reduced calorie product ranges, sweetened with stevia. As calorie reduction remains high on the agenda, it's likely that 2015 will see stevia continue to become more mainstream.

You will like to know more about Stevia and applications of Stevia in Food & Beverages industries, participate to Stevia Tasteful Convention 2015.

More information: www.wso-site.com

Source: FoodBev (<http://www.foodbev.com/news/2015-the-year-of-stevia#.VOH9dy7Ao7h>).□