

PRESS RELEASE

More consumers seek nutrient-dense foods while meat-reducing slows

Consumer interest in eating more nutrient-dense foods continues to climb, with 18% of people saying they look for more nutrient-dense foods – foods that pack in a lot of beneficial nutrients relative to their energy content.

“Compared to 2021, this was the eating behaviour that had the biggest increase in consumer interest,” says food industry expert Julian Mellentin. In a recent survey of consumers¹ in five countries by consultancy *New Nutrition Business*, of which Mellentin is director, nutrient density was mentioned by 18% of consumers, compared to 12% in 2021.

Of the five countries surveyed (USA, UK, Australia, Brazil and Spain), Brazil had the highest level of interest in nutrient density, at 37%. Spain ranked second with 23%, and the UK scored lowest with only 7% of people interested in eating more nutrient-dense foods. Consumers aged under 34 are more likely to be looking for nutrient density than older consumers.

“In contrast, the trend of consuming fewer carbohydrates appears to be levelling off,” Mellentin adds. Across the five countries, 26% of respondents said they were trying to eat fewer carbs in 2022 – the same as in 2021.”

“Consumer beliefs about food and health have become increasingly diverse over the last 10 years,” Mellentin explains. “People do their own research online and try out new eating patterns to find out what works for them. And interestingly, most eating patterns reach a natural ceiling with about 25%-30% of consumers. With the exception of sugar reduction, very few become a truly mass behaviour.”

The trend to consume less meat, which grew very strongly from 2014 onwards, is also levelling off. In 2022, 24% of people said they were reducing their meat consumption, unchanged from 2020.

Brazil and Spain had the most meat reducers (31% and 30% respectively). The US scored lowest on meat reduction (18% of consumers). It's a behaviour which is more common among consumers aged 55 and above than among younger consumers. “It seems counter-intuitive, but it's what we have been finding for several years, as have many of our customers,” says Mellentin. “The idea that it's the young driving meat reducing largely comes from lazy journalism.”

As a sign of the growing diversity of consumers' health beliefs, there are more emergent new health interests showing up – concerns that are still niche, but which have been growing steadily over the past five years. Two examples are:

1. Eating to improve hormonal health – followed by 8% of consumers in the US, Australia and Spain, slightly more in Brazil, and 4% in the UK. “It's an issue that matters more to women than men and affects wellbeing over the whole of their adult lives. It's an issue that women often say the medical mainstream pays little attention to. An increasing number are managing their hormonal health through food and supplements.”
2. Also emergent is the avoidance of seed-oils – such as canola or sunflower – which is a concern for 6% of people, up from almost zero back in 2019. This growing interest relates to concerns about inflammation.

“These emergent behaviours are much more important for corporate strategy than veganism,” Mellentin adds. “A vegan diet is the choice followed by the lowest percentage of consumers in all countries – just 3%. Veganism has shown no increase since 2019. It's notable that a topic which is often described by the media as growing is in reality a topic of least interest in the real world.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The New Nutrition Business 5-country Survey 2023 is available here: <https://www.new-nutrition.com/nnbReport/display/270> The data is laid out in 84 charts, with brief summaries and explanations. We compare countries, look at the effects of gender and age, and show how the picture is changing compared to previous years.
2. Editors can request comment or arrange an interview with Julian Mellentin by contacting:
North America - Dale Buss at daledbuss@aol.com or 248/953-2701
International - Mikaela Linden at mikaela.linden@new-nutrition.com
3. Julian Mellentin is a consultant specialising in the international business of food, nutrition and health. He is director of New Nutrition Business, which provides expert consultancy services to agriculture, ingredient and branded product companies on all aspects of nutrition and health, from science to retail strategy, focusing on concrete, implementable strategies. *New Nutrition Business* publications provide case studies and analysis of success and failure in the global nutrition business and are used by companies in 42 countries. Find out more at www.new-nutrition.com.