

# TRENDS



FOOD AND NUTRITION ISSUES LIKELY TO IMPACT THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT 1 TO 3 YEARS

## TOP 10 NUTRITION TRENDS FOR 2014

### 1. Milk and dairy foods promising in prevention of metabolic syndrome and diabetes.

Metabolic syndrome and diabetes will continue to be top health concerns, with focus on prevention, as an estimated 35 percent of Americans have pre-diabetes. Metabolic syndrome is the cluster of risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure, abnormal blood fats and reduced effectiveness of the body's natural insulin.

Certain foods and dietary patterns are getting attention for their ability to lower the risk of both diabetes and heart disease. Milk and dairy foods are often shown to be associated with lower risk, possibly due to their calcium, vitamin D, protein, dairy fat or specific fatty acids. Even a few clinical trials—the gold standard of research studies—have shown preventative effects from dairy. Recent studies are attempting to quantify the link between dairy consumption and risk reduction. For example, one found that for every 400-gram (1 ½ servings) increase in total dairy, risk of diabetes dropped 7 percent. Dairy Council of California has initiated strategies such as a session at an upcoming nutrition conference to educate health professionals on this research and the protective effect of dairy against these diseases.

### 2. Dairy fat may no longer be a villain in heart disease risk.

Saturated fat is getting the green light in some circles as new research continues to show that specific saturated fatty acids, particularly those in dairy foods, are either neutral or positive in heart health. While public health-based recommendations still group all saturated fats together and set strict limits on intake levels, this emerging research is being published in consumer articles. In spite of the accumulating evidence that saturated fat is not all bad, many public health officials continue to cling to existing recommendations.

Dietary patterns are also being researched for their link to heart disease. Those consistently associated with lower risk are the DASH Diet and Mediterranean dietary pattern, suggesting that whole food diets and lifestyles—not individual foods or nutrients—can reduce risk. In the DASH Diet, low-fat milk and dairy products are central to healthy dietary patterns. Dairy Council of California promotes the DASH Diet to consumers and saturated fat research to health professionals.

### 3. Protein continues to provide a multitude of benefits across ages.

Protein's position in a healthy diet strengthens as consumers seek it out for sports nutrition, weight management, energy, muscle building and healthy aging. The demand for high-quality protein—from milk and milk products, lean meats, poultry, fish and eggs—is predicted to rise as the list of benefits grows and as carbohydrates, especially refined varieties like sugar and white bread, are negatively positioned.

The protein market is growing at the retail level, with many new food products in the last year involving added protein or highlighting existing protein. Many protein-fortified beverages are being developed for both pre- and post-workout. Newer protein sources such as pea, rice, alfalfa, quinoa and chia are gaining popularity, and plant-based protein will increasingly compete with milk protein.

Much of the protein research shows that increased intake levels are necessary to maximize body composition and other health benefits. Meals and snacks are an opportunity for product placement, since spreading protein intake equally throughout the day is important. Breakfast opportunities include yogurt parfaits, breakfast shakes and milk on cereal. Dairy Council of California promotes eating breakfast and educates about protein's health effects to its key audiences.

#### 4. Consumers demand personalization in many aspects of their lives.

Consumers are expecting—and demanding—personalization in many areas from shopping to dining. Despite privacy issues, social media is feeding this expectation as consumers are more willing to provide personal information in order to receive benefits. Analysis of big data identifies opportunities to provide personalized experiences that resonate with consumers on an emotional level.

At the same time, social media also arms consumers, putting powerful tools at their fingertips. They do not hesitate to respond to things they don't like, often using opinion versus science. Because of the expectations of personalization, the food industry is also expected to react to consumer demands. Personalization matches Dairy Council of California's long-held approach of individualizing food and lifestyle choices.

#### 5. Challenges to milk consumption continue due to a litany of complex concerns.

Consumer concerns about food have expanded beyond price, seasonality and taste. Food choices today often reflect concerns about the environment, animal care, GMOs, pesticides, specific diet claims and many other factors. Consensus science is often overlooked in food decisions as consumers make choices based on emotion and anecdotes rather than on the body of scientific studies showing a food's nutritional or disease-fighting attributes.

Mistrust of the government and the food industry also plays a role as food choices are driven by credibility perceptions. Local farmers are preferred over large agribusinesses; sustainable production practices are scrutinized with a skeptical eye; fresh and natural foods are more appealing than processed foods. Transparency in actions and communications is important to build trust and meet the needs of consumers.

#### 6. The role of the gut microbiome in health is advancing rapidly.

Research is showing the gut microbiome—the population of naturally-occurring bacteria in the intestinal tract—is key to health and many diseases. Gut health can be altered to some extent through diet, specifically by the type and amount of probiotics that individuals consume. Certain probiotics are being studied for their ability to help with weight management and satiety, improve mood

and cognitive function and reduce incidence of colds and even some types of cancer. While this body of evidence is growing, it is unclear whether studies will be far enough along for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Committee to include probiotics (in yogurt and other fermented foods) in its recommendations for a healthy diet.

Related research is looking at the level of probiotic consumption needed for certain benefits, with some studies claiming that only small amounts of yogurt on a weekly basis are needed to lower blood pressure and manage weight. Other health effects may require higher levels, or a combination of specific strains, for optimal benefit.

#### 7. Obesity still a primary health concern, with efforts focused on children.

Obesity incidence continues its climb upward, at just over 27 percent of U.S. adults for 2013. Specific subgroups such as 2- to 5-year-old children, however, are seeing a decline, indicating some progress is being made.

Sugar is a major target in obesity-prevention efforts, with some public health officials advocating a tax on soft drinks and other foods and beverages with added sugar. Some municipalities are considering moving ahead with their own city-wide tax before any nationwide policy is made. Proposed new food labels call out added sugar more clearly.

Children are more likely to be obese if they get inadequate sleep, have obese parents and have a restricted diet—the latter often, ironically, leads to overeating. Dairy Council of California garners many opportunities in obesity prevention efforts by providing a sequential nutrition education curriculum in schools and working with national and local health care partners. Guiding health professionals and parents in helping their children establish healthy eating patterns will be fundamental.

#### 8. Consumers' interest in natural, functional, fresh foods grows.

Terms that resonate with consumers are natural, locally grown, fresh, healthy, organic and sustainable. Products labeled as lower calorie, low HFCS (high fructose corn syrup), low sodium, no trans fats, gluten-free and GMO-free are also appealing to increasingly health-savvy consumers. The food industry is responding to this quest for healthful ingredients through transparency in its production practices, labeling even when not mandated and using ingredients that consumers will accept.

Dairy has an opportunity to be “reborn” as a natural whole food in this arena. Milk is minimally processed and comes with an irreplaceable package of nutrients needed for health. Yogurt is also strongly positioned as a natural and affordable functional food—defined as a food that has a positive effect on health beyond basic nutrition. Supporting this trend, consumers are returning to butter, with sales up 40 percent in the United States as people pass on margarine and other spreads with industrial trans fatty acids. Dairy Council of California, through multiple messages online and in print materials, touts the natural, fresh and functional benefits of milk.

## 9. Cognition and mental health are new areas of nutrition research.

From young to old, the quest for optimal brain function has never been stronger, with recent research looking at beneficial nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins B and E. Preliminary research also suggests a beneficial effect of dairy in brain health. For example, studies have found that low-fat dairy products, as part of a regular, balanced diet, may benefit the brain during aging and that individuals who drank milk daily in childhood had better cognition as adults than non-milk drinkers.

Slowing the physical and cognitive aging processes is a strong area of research that could aid in preventing disease, extending the span of healthy living and dramatically improving public health.

## 10. Changes coming in the health care environment.

Health care is extending beyond the traditional doctor’s office to community settings such as drug and retail stores, health clinics, schools and worksites. This shift presents unique opportunities for nutrition education and opens up ways for the dairy industry to contribute to community wellness. Using multiple opportunities to engage consumers increases the success of nutrition education. For example, if a schoolchild brings nutrition information home to the parents, and the parents have that information reinforced at work and at the grocery store, behavior change is more likely to occur and be sustained.

Along with the move toward community-based health care comes the challenge of a multitude of health and nutrition “experts” who may have little official training. Community health worker numbers are predicted to increase an unprecedented 21 percent in the next 10 years as demand grows. Prevention care will increasingly be handled by these community health workers, and the role of medical doctors may be to focus on serious illnesses. Dairy Council of California’s training of allied health professionals will expand to reach these new community health providers.

### EDITOR’S NOTE

Produced twice annually by Dairy Council of California, the TRENDS newsletter updates industry leaders on emerging nutrition issues likely to have a positive or negative effect upon the dairy industry. The trends tracking system, monitored by a team of staffers, is designed to identify issues early and track their development through multiple communication channels. Analysis is done biannually on the issues. For more information or to receive a hard copy of the TRENDS newsletter, please contact Kendall House at [KHouse@DairyCouncilofCA.org](mailto:KHouse@DairyCouncilofCA.org).



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