

TRENDS



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

Health promotion focuses on the total mix of nutrients within a food, not individual nutrients.

While nutritional research has traditionally focused on the health effects of individual nutrients, researchers are recognizing that it is the full package of nutrients and components in foods that works in unison toward health and disease prevention. Often, in fact, the benefit of a nutrient is lost or minimized when it is isolated from the food source.

Dairy is a perfect example of a food with a complete package of nutrients impossible to tease apart. Many studies have shown an association between higher consumption of dairy foods and lower risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and metabolic syndrome. Dairy foods with probiotics are also linked to a stronger immune system, intestinal health, blood sugar control and weight management. In fact, there is no other single food or beverage that provides the same package of interacting nutrients and components as provided by milk.

Many consumers are already seeking out whole, unprocessed foods, and there is an opportunity for additional messaging around the benefits of these foods. Dairy Council of California incorporates realistic, feasible messages around whole foods and healthy eating patterns into their nutrition education materials and initiatives.

Consumers increasingly make food choices based on factors beyond nutrition.

There are multiple considerations that drive consumer food choices, and nutritional benefits are not always front of mind. Rather, environmental concerns and production practices are playing larger roles in food decisions, as shown by the increasing popularity of foods labeled as organic, natural, GMO-free, hormone-free and antibiotic-free.

Concerns over sustainability and the environment are driving many people to plant-based diets. The assumption is that plant foods don't produce as many greenhouse gases as animal foods. However, many consumers don't realize they need to consume large amounts of plant foods for the necessary calories, protein and other nutrients, increasing the total carbon footprint of the diet. The plant-based movement is impacting the dairy industry as milk alternatives—soy, almond, rice and other plant-based beverages—are gaining market share. These alternatives do not come close to providing the package of nutrients that dairy milk provides. Through website resources, sponsored conference sessions and other efforts Dairy Council of California is educating health professionals and consumers alike on the benefits of milk.

All in all, people need to feel good about the foods they buy and consume. Accurate and complete information about how the food industry produces and processes foods is important to help consumers make informed choices. The food industry can enhance transparency by providing information to consumers through labeling and company websites.

Health care diversifies beyond traditional providers and ways of reaching people.

With changes in the health care environment, there has been an increase in health education offered by allied health care providers such as public health nurses, physician’s assistants, social workers, health coaches, community health workers and promotores. Some of these providers are equipped to meet consumers “where they are”—in their homes, schools, workplaces and communities. Achieving behavior change toward healthier lifestyles is often successful due to a high trust factor between these new providers and their patients.

In this new arena, the focus is on preventing rather than treating diseases. Long-term, preventing chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and heart disease will save billions of health care dollars in treatment. Nutrition education has a valuable place in this new environment because a healthy diet throughout life can ward off diseases and keep people healthy longer.

Technology is playing a big role in the way health education is delivered. Health professionals are embracing new technology such as mobile devices to store and retrieve information on large populations in order to help treat individual patients. Genetic information is being collected that will help create personalized and effective treatments.

These changes present opportunities for Dairy Council of California to reach customers through effective technology, using new delivery channels to reach allied health care professionals.

Personalization is becoming an expectation.

As people have increased access to more powerful technology, the need and demand for individualized services is greater. From shopping to dining to health care, people know what they want and how, when and where they want it. Social media

and phone and computer apps are connecting consumers—even low-income subgroups—to the information they desire without going through a middle man. Technology is also helping consumers better track their diets and activity through smartphones, wearable monitors and mobile apps.

The move toward personalization will make public health and nutrition recommendations such as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans less useful for people who are seeking highly specific advice that meets their preferences, disease risks, health goals, cultures, traditions and lifestyles. Public health recommendations will need to be positioned as a starting point that can be individualized to meet specific needs. Dairy Council of California, through interactive tools such as [Healthy Eating My Way](#), helps consumers of all ages individualize nutrition messages that are meaningful and motivating and that lead to successful behavior change.

Through an ongoing trends-identification process, Dairy Council of California paints a picture of the environment in which the dairy industry operates and identifies issues that must be addressed in order to be effective and influential. The identified trends shape Dairy Council of California’s strategic plans geared at educating health and wellness professionals, educators and consumers about the health benefits of dairy products, including the advantages covered in this trends report.

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. For more information or to receive a hard copy of the TRENDS newsletter, please contact Kendall House at KHouse@DairyCouncilofCA.org.



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