

PRESS RELEASE

The trend towards essential products for specific target groups

Functional food: a complex market calls for diversification

Ahrensburg, June 2014 – The market for functional foods is characterized by ever more stringent quality requirements and a demand for products directed towards individual target groups. If they are to position themselves successfully, fortified foods and beverages have to be designed very specifically for the different age groups among the consumers and their particular circumstances.

Foods with an additional health benefit are becoming more and more popular. In particular it is individual product concepts emphasizing specific health aspects that offer added value. Jan Heuer, head of this business unit at SternVitamin: “The market demands much greater differentiation now than it did in the past. Gone are the days when a single multivitamin tablet satisfied all consumers. We now have to offer functional foods with a specific health benefit to meet individual consumer needs. Examples include yoghurt with beauty vitamins for the skin and power drinks with selected minerals to boost mental performance.” You might say these targeted concepts create a “win-win situation” for both sides: the consumers get products tailor-made to their individual needs, while diversification brings the manufacturers additional sales potential.

Besides the classic vitamins, minerals and trace elements, plant extracts are now playing an increasingly important role. Today’s consumers are much better informed about nutrients and plant extracts – not least because of the digital media. A knowledge of indications, positive effects and health benefits of the substances is no longer confined to experts. To enable manufacturers to exploit the positive image of the active substances, SternVitamin has for some years been developing premixes for specific target groups that contain health-promoting ingredients as well as the usual micronutrients. “Vitamins and minerals will always be of central importance, but in conjunction with other substances like amino acids, plant extracts and other functional ingredients”, Dr. Sabine Hildebrandt, Head of Research & Development at SternVitamin, explains. “For example, a near-water drink to boost performance can contain taurine or glucuronolactone as a unique selling proposition, but the product only offers maximum benefit in combination with vital substances like calcium or vitamin C.”

SternVitamin GmbH & Co. KG

Kurt-Fischer-Straße 55
D-22926 Ahrensburg
Telefon: + 49 (0) 41 02 / 202-007
Fax: + 49 (0) 41 02 / 202-070
E-Mail: info@sternvitamin.de
www.sternvitamin.de

Geschäftssitz Ahrensburg
Ust.-ID-Nr.: DE247934636
Amtsgericht Lübeck HRA 4673 HL
Komplementärin
SternVitamin Verwaltungsges. mbH
Amtsgericht Lübeck HRB 6595 HL
Geschäftsführer
Volkmär Wywiol / Lennart Kutschinski

Deutsche Bank AG, Hamburg
BLZ 200 700 00, Konto 030 354 500
BIC: DEUTDEHH
IBAN: DE22 2007 0000 0030 3545 00
HSH Nordbank AG, Hamburg
BLZ 210 500 00, Konto 535 930 000
BIC: HSHNDEHH
IBAN: DE41 2105 0000 0053 5930 00

The much-discussed health claims can be used as an effective marketing tool. They make it possible to advertise health-supporting effects directly on the pack, in brochures or on a home page. “The permissible health claims for vitamins, minerals and trace elements cover a wide range of applications – from maintaining normal bones through mental and physical performance to support for the cardiovascular system”, Dr. Hildebrandt says. “If you take a close look at the list you will find something suitable for nearly every region and function of the body. That gives rise to enormous marketing potential – especially if you supplement the micronutrients with health-supporting plant extracts and the like.”

Current examples from SternVitamin’s product range are micronutrient premixes for lifestyle drinks. Besides selected vitamins, the “Mind-Calming” premix contains plant extracts from elder and balm which have been shown in various scientific studies to help relieve stress and promote mental and emotional wellbeing. In conjunction with the B vitamins and vitamin C, the premix forms the basis for lifestyle drinks with a relaxing effect. With a balanced combination of vitamins, minerals and green tea extracts, the “Brainpower” premix aids concentration and memory. For that reason it appeals particularly to professional people who have to maintain a high level of concentration in their daily work – whether at their desk or in endless meetings.

“Against the background of demographic change, so-called “50 plus” concepts are an important trend”, Dr. Hildebrandt comments. “Possibilities might include a soy shake fortified with vital substances specially for women in the second half of life, a “bone-protecting loaf” with vitamin K₂, calcium and magnesium, or a power cocktail with Q10 and selenium for strengthening the body’s defences. There is also a well-established nursing drink with iron and zinc that is offered especially for young mothers.” According to the expert, products lending themselves to fortification include both staple foods like bread and edible fats, cereals which have a positive health image in any case, and also soft drinks and dairy products. Sweets, biscuits and dairy products are a good possibility for children in particular. But a crucial factor in all communication with consumers is that the vital substances must offer a demonstrable health benefit. “Consumers want reliable studies providing clear evidence of efficacy. In this field there are now a number of reputable studies that go far beyond the health claims”, Dr. Hildebrandt explains.

Besides concepts for specific target groups, the market for ingredients and food supplements shows a further trend, Jan Heuer reports: “We are observing much stricter requirements in respect of hygiene and product safety. In fact the safety of foods is now one of the most important quality attributes in marketing. So more and more food manufacturers are demanding extremely high quality standards for the raw materials and

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processing methods. Only companies that meet these requirements and constantly adjust their production methods will be able to withstand the increasing pressure of competition.”

About SternVitamin:

SternVitamin GmbH & Co. KG with its registered office in Ahrensburg is a member of the Stern-Wywiol Gruppe. For 33 years the group of companies has been among the successful enterprises operating internationally in the world of Food and Feed Ingredients. The eleven specialist firms that make up the Stern-Wywiol Gruppe produce a wide range of functional systems for food and animal nutrition. Besides SternVitamin for vitamin and mineral premixes, the dynamic group includes such well-known firms as Mühlenchemie for flour improvers; DeutscheBack for baking ingredients; Hydrosol for stabilizing systems; SternEnzym with enzymes for baking, sugar confectionery and the production of alcohol and beer; OlbrichtArom for food flavourings; HERZA Schokolade for functional chocolate pieces; Sternchemie for food lipids, in particular lecithin, MCT oil, red palm oil and spray-dried coconut milk. In the contract production of powdered foods and food supplements the Stern-Wywiol Gruppe operates under the trademark SternMaid. All the firms’ activities revolve around applications research at the modern Technology Centre in Ahrensburg, near Hamburg, with an area of more than 3,000 m², where each of the specialist firms has access to the skills of the whole group through the Know-How Connection.

More information from:

Daniela Borchmann
Marketing SternVitamin
Phone: +49 (0)40 / 284 039-27
E-mail: dborchmann@sternvitamin.de

Contact for the press:

teamhansen / Manfred Hansen
Bismarckstr. 54 / 20259 Hamburg
Phone: +49 (0)40 / 23 51 77-51
E-mail: manfred.hansen@teamhansen.de

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Telefon: + 49 (0) 41 02 / 202-007
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