


# Simply sweet enough?



A broad array of sugar solutions are now available for the confectionery sector, and gradually gaining market recognition

## The market for sugar and sweeteners within the confectionery sector is one that is undergoing considerable development, as Neill Barston reports

The past few years have seen an increasing spotlight on the sugar confectionery sector in terms of manufacturers coming under ever-greater scrutiny in being seen to offer a greater array of choices, including healthier options.

As part of that, delivering sugar reduced chocolate and sweets options, as well as less fat and salt has been seen as a key priority in a number of regions, including the UK – where a snacks tax is presently under consideration for those ranges that are deemed by some quarters as being among the most impactful on the public's health.

According to Ghislain Caron, global product line manager, Cargill, while there's still little denying consumer desires for sweet confectionery treats, we also know they are scrutinising sugar content closely, even on indulgent items.

Innova data shows that 18 per cent of sugar confectionery launches tracked in Europe in 2020 featured a sugar and/or calorie claim.

Euromonitor data corroborates this increasing popularity, as sugar-free sugar confectionery volumes continue to grow at a steady pace. The past five years exhibited

a growth of one per cent (CAGR '15-'20) and in the coming five years, volumes are predicted to grow two per cent (CAGR 2020-2025).

"Many product developers are in the process of, or have already launched, reduced-sugar versions of their best-selling products to meet consumer needs.

"Fortunately, an ever-growing portfolio of low- and no-calorie sweeteners make it possible to satisfy consumers' sweet candy cravings while minimising their sugar intake. Our Zerose erythritol, for example, can play a pivotal role in many reduced-sugar confectionery applications," explains Caron of the company's sweeteners.

Her colleague Magalie Benoit, senior application specialist, explained that the company uses a natural fermentation process to make commercial quantities of erythritol, which is part of the polyol family of sweeteners.

Erythritol, found in pears, grapes and melons, offers numerous advantages over its relatives, including its status as a zero-calorie sweetener and reputation for a clean, sweet, sugar-like taste. It also boasts the highest digestive tolerance compared to other polyols, an especially important consideration for indulgent products like candies.

Erythritol is particularly well suited for mints and gums, in part because of its oral health benefits.

Research shows that erythritol is more effective than sorbitol and xylitol at preventing tooth decay. It also contributes sensory benefits. When erythritol dissolves in the mouth, it has a relatively high negative heat of solution, creating a pleasant, cooling sensation and amplifying the cooling effect of mint-flavoured products.

On the functional side, confectioners will find erythritol keeps chewing gum soft and pliable, enhancing the chewing experience, and extending shelf life. It's even found a place in gum coatings, where a blend of erythritol and maltitol slows down the crystallisation speed of erythritol, which helps in the gum coating process.

In addition to erythritol, Cargill's sweetener portfolio includes a broad range of no-, low- and full-calorie sweeteners, including stevia; other polyols like isomalt, maltitol, mannitol and sorbitol; glucose and fructose syrups; and dextrose, all backed by our extensive expertise in confectionery formulation.

### Sugar research

Innova Market Insights' latest Ingredient Insider report analyses trends in sugar reduction and the use of sweeteners in food and beverages. The report includes market and consumer research, new product activity and the use of sugar-related claims within the industry, including confectionery and bakery markets.

Efforts to reduce sugar levels are well established and ongoing, reflecting the

well-documented link to dental caries as well as the widely held view that high sugar consumption is a causative factor for a range of conditions including weight gain, diabetes and hyperactivity in children. Government intervention in this regard has become more widespread globally, including the use of sugar taxes and the regulation of advertising targeting children.

Four in 10 consumers in Innova's global Health and Nutrition Survey in 2020 claimed to have decreased their sugar consumption over a 12-month period. The prevention of health conditions was the leading reason given for this reduction, ahead of weight management and followed by dental health.

As the organisation has previously noted, manufacturers within the confectionery sector are increasingly looking to alternative sweeteners with product lines, as well as means of reducing sugar, as has been seen recently with Dairy Milk's 30 per cent less sugar variety.

There have also been a broad range of natural sweeteners including stevia that have been put forward by groups such as Tate & Lyle, Cargill and Puratos to name a few, who have helped push the boundaries for new product development, which is increasingly looking towards perceived healthier options.

"In recent years, ingredient innovations have enabled manufacturers to better replicate the multiple sensory and functional properties of sugar, including sweetness, mouthfeel, bulk, browning and moisture retention, while lowering the amounts of sugar and calories," reports Lu Ann Williams, global insights director at Innova.

### Powdered solutions

In response to changing markets, for its part, Kanegrade has produced its series of industry ingredients which have included evolving a series of fruit powders that serve



Kanegrade (UK headquarters pictured) is among those producing sweetening solutions

as strong natural sweeteners that have been used to strong effect within the segment.

As the company explained, they are used in hundreds of applications including plant based foods, confectionery, sauces, protein mixes, fillings.

The business noted that consumer interest in plant based products is at "an all time high" with many people choosing a plant based diet for health reasons, potentially assisting with weight loss, as well as being better for the environment.

Meanwhile, US-based Batory Foods, a national sales and supply chain management solutions provider of commodity and specialty food ingredients, has introduced Batory Sweet Essentials, a new line-up of five scientifically-developed high intensity sweetener blends that are sucrose replacers, created for optimum performance in sugar reduction and replacement.

The interchangeable line of sweeteners eliminates the need for manufacturers to reformulate recipes to offer lower sugar alternatives. As it noted, the series meet FDA GRAS regulations and are ideal for use across virtually all dairy, frozen, snack, baked and beverage applications, and serves as another key example of an ever-expanding market. ♦



US firm Batory has also released an extensive range of sweetening products

