

Resilience in changing times



The savoury snacks industry has continued to succeed in the face of tumultuous change in recent years. **Sebastian Emig** considers our industry's ability to adapt and respond to changing consumer priorities

THE food industry is a barometer for societal changes, reflecting shifts in consumer priorities and global challenges. Recently, our industry has navigated through the tumultuous waters of global conflicts, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 and a growing cost-of-living crisis. These factors have led to a discernible shift in consumer preferences towards diets that promote health and bolster immunity. People are increasingly turning to foods rich in essential nutrients such as vitamin D and zinc, and fermented products, seeking to enhance their physical wellbeing.

Moreover, the influence of media on food trends is undeniable. The popularity of health-focused series like Netflix's 'Blue Zone' has brought to the fore diets associated with longevity and wellness, resonating with the current health-centric consumer ethos.

SAVOURY SNACKS: RESILIENT AND EVOLVING

The European snacks market stands out in this changing landscape for its resilience. Despite facing soaring production costs and logistical challenges, the sector has shown a remarkable ability to adapt and thrive. The rise of 'snackification' is a testament to this adaptability, highlighting a shift towards convenient, nutritious and sustainable snacking options.

This evolution is particularly evident

in the way snacks are now integrating into regular meal routines. Driven by time constraints and a desire for culinary creativity, consumers are increasingly turning to snacks as between-meal fillers and as components of their regular diets.

The future of the snacks market is bright, with significant growth anticipated, especially in healthier and more sustainable options. Consumers are increasingly aware of the impact of their food choices on their health and the environment, and this awareness is driving innovation in the snack sector. Manufacturers are responding with snacks that are not only tasty but also nutritionally enriched, meeting the demands of a discerning consumer base.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES IN SNACKING

As we look towards the upcoming political cycle in Europe, ESA is strategically positioned to influence and shape industry strategies. Our commitment to sustainability, health, and nutrition has never been stronger. Through initiatives such as the EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practice, we aim to guide the industry towards responsible practices that align with consumer expectations and regulatory frameworks. The upcoming EU Parliament and Commission elections present a unique opportunity for ESA to advocate for policies and regulations

that benefit the snack industry. Projections suggest that nearly 60% of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will be replaced and the next European Commission will have to tackle fundamental drivers of food systems like declining food security amidst environmental degradation, resource depletion and climate change.

Further fragmentation and a rise of the extremes in the European Parliament is expected and several national elections will change the political landscape in the Council. Migration and economic security will gain further importance on the EU agenda. With all this in mind, it seems likely that the EU may well give up on some of the Farm to Fork ambitions - notably nutrient profiling and front-of-pack nutrition labelling. Your team in Brussels is dedicated to being a reliable partner for policymakers, striving to balance industry needs with consumer demands and environmental stewardship.

INFLATIONARY PRESSURES AND CONSUMER PRIORITIES

Inflationary pressures are a significant concern in today's market, impacting production costs and consumer spending power. The snack industry is not immune to these challenges. However, it is encouraging to see manufacturers innovate to maintain affordability while ensuring quality. This balance is crucial in retaining consumer trust ►



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and loyalty in a competitive market.

Another critical consideration is the increasing consumer focus on sustainability and environmental impact. The snack industry is responding with initiatives that promote sustainable sourcing, reduce waste and embrace eco-friendly packaging solutions. These efforts resonate with environmentally conscious consumers and contribute to the broader goal of a sustainable food system.

HEALTH, NUTRITION AND FLAVOUR TRENDS

Health and nutrition continue to be at the forefront of consumer priorities, with growing demand for snacks offering health benefits, such as those rich in protein, fibre and essential nutrients. This trend is complemented by a rising interest in global flavours and culinary diversity, as consumers seek snacks that offer nutritional value and exciting taste experiences.

The concept of 'healthy indulgence' is still gaining traction, where consumers look for snacks that satisfy their cravings without compromising their health. This trend reflects a more holistic approach to snacking, where enjoyment and wellbeing go hand in hand.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Technology plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the snacks industry. From advanced manufacturing processes to innovative packaging solutions, technological advancements enable manufacturers to meet consumers' evolving needs more efficiently and sustainably.

Innovation is not limited to product development but extends to how brands engage with consumers. Digital platforms, social media, and data analytics are transforming marketing strategies, allowing for more personalised and interactive consumer experiences. With the rapidly expanding possibilities of AI, our industry is facing a crucial revolution that will touch all aspects: from raw material sourcing and quality control, transport considerations and refined manufacturing processes to smarter and more agile marketing of our wonderful products.

SNACKEX 2024



Many of you will still remember the success of SNACKEX 2022 in Hamburg, which was our industry's first major face-to-face event in Europe after the COVID lockdowns. If so, you will no doubt be more than looking forward to getting together again for SNACKEX 2024 in Stockholm, Sweden.

I can already tell you that it's going to be quite an event! We have been blown away by the interest of industry players – big and small – who are keen to present their latest innovations, products, ideas, machines, flavours, ingredients and so much more to an audience that cannot wait to walk the floors of our exhibition. Never before did we have so much interest from all corners of the world, and they are all coming to network, buy and sell. Stand space is sold quickly – so hurry up if you want to be presented on the show floor.

We look forward to welcoming you to a fantastic show for sellers and buyers in June! ■

Director General Sebastian Emig*

*in his capacity as permanent representative of Prime Consulting BXLBCN SL