

FUELLING THE FUTURE:

NUTRITIONAL TRENDS 2026



IN THIS EDITION

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new crew**

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under control**

**Nutrition that
evolves with you**

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frontier**

**Soft drinks,
hard benefits**

For B2B professionals



FrieslandCampina
Ingredients

2026: the year of accessible nutrition

‘AI-powered’. ‘GLP-1 agonists’. ‘Longevity’.
These are undeniably the trending terms of 2025 – and the forces shaping the nutritional landscape of 2026.



It's been a momentous year on the food and nutrition stage: technology and rapid advancements are breaking down barriers and making the right nutrition more inclusive and attainable than ever. The convergence of innovation and inclusion is defining a new phase – one marked by better access to nutrition and well-being for all.

Several powerful forces are driving this

shift; AI advancements are transforming how we discover, plan and purchase food, while social media is making access to nutrition information ever more reachable. Meanwhile GLP-1 medications, now more affordable and widely available, are fundamentally shifting how people manage their weight and prevent potential future health issues.

But with unprecedented access to information, comes higher demands. Consumers want it all: guidance, convenience, transparency, quality – and most importantly, results. Meeting these demands will be a defining challenge for brands in 2026. So how can you keep up?

In this year's edition of FrieslandCampina Ingredients' Trends Magazine, we'll uncover the trends underpinning the next year – where effortless access to healthy nutrition is the order of the day. We'll explore:



Protein and its new crew get everywhere in fortified foods to deliver benefits across high-impact formats.



Consumers get **cravings under control**.



The growing, universal demand for **nutrition that evolves with you**.



The fibre frontier set to reshape the gut health market.



Unlock innovation in **soft drinks with hard benefits**.

As always, get in touch if you'd like more information on how we can help you tap into these trends with innovative applications in 2026.

Floor van der Horst

Global Marketing Director
Performance & Active nutrition
at FrieslandCampina Ingredients



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THE AGE OF
SMART NUTRITION

Protein and its new crew

Protein-packed has gone mainstream – and now consumers want it paired with targeted ingredients to maximise their gains.

It's been a defining year for protein: this powerhouse nutrient dominates supermarket shelves – even in places you'd least expect. From cereals and chocolate bars to cookies and bagels, once indulgent 'treats' are being redefined as 'good to eat' thanks to protein fortification. The category is still expanding – emerging applications such as frozen protein products, like ice creams and fortified ready meals, are gaining momentum, while protein coffee is fast becoming a functional favourite for consumers seeking energy and satiety in every sip. Together, these innovations show just how deeply protein is permeating everyday eating and drinking habits – and brands must keep up with demand.



Nearly 60% of global food and beverage consumers actively incorporate more protein into their diets.¹



But despite its enduring popularity, protein alone no longer impresses. In 2026, it's the baseline – and brands will need to work harder to stand out.

Enter protein+: applications that combine high-quality protein with functional ingredients that deliver holistic wellness. These products have been building momentum for years – but 2026 will be the year they truly shine. Demand for this trend is particularly noticeable amongst Gen Z and Millennials, 50% of which report not only following a high-protein diet but increasingly seeking out brands that offer functional foods that not only emphasise protein, but also fibre and gut health on pack.ⁱⁱ

“Protein is just the starting point. The brands that stand out are those combining protein with other holistic ingredients – prebiotics, vitamins, fibre – in ways that excite consumers and deliver real benefits. The secret? Balancing effective, complementary ingredients that make every bite, sip or slurp a nutritional delight.”

Sophie Zillinger Molenaar

Global Marketing Lead at
FrieslandCampina Ingredients



Ready to shake up your next protein formulation?

Protein drinks can work so much harder than simply increasing grams of protein per millilitre. Discover how our Fermentis ingredient can help you elevate your next recipe by bringing together whey protein, prebiotics and probiotic cultures through fermentation, creating a powerful blend that supports gut health and muscle support via the gut-muscle axis.

Power up your next protein formulation with FrieslandCampina Ingredients' innovation expertise – and lead the way in the next generation of protein+ fortification.



Cravings under control

As GLP-1 agonists reshape appetite, consumers are seeking smarter, healthier ways to manage cravings.

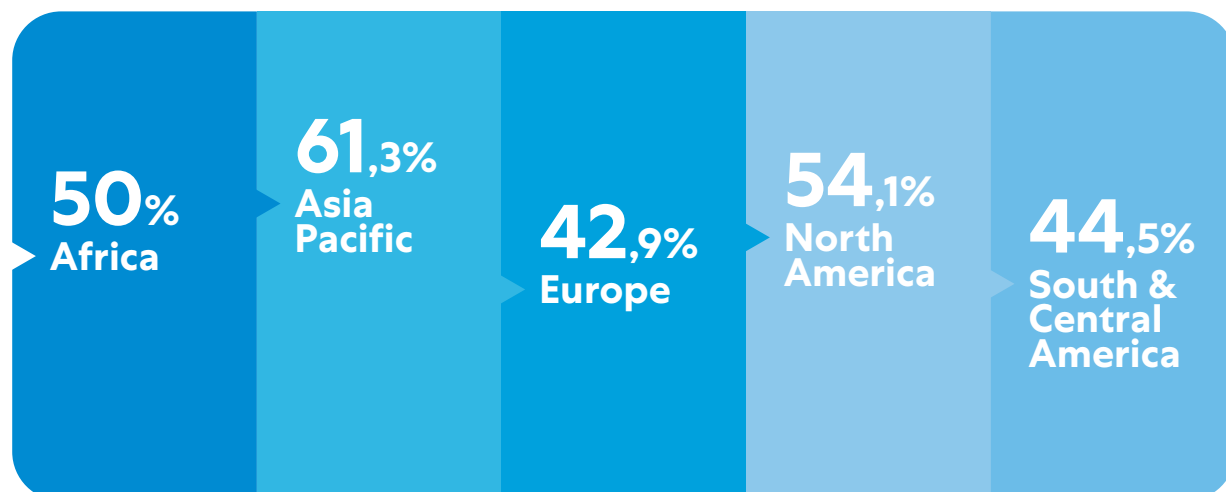
New, attention grabbing and seemingly here to stay, glucagon-like peptide (GLP-1) agonists continue to shake up the foundations of the health and nutrition market.

Known for suppressing appetite, GLP-1 agonists mean consumers are eating fewer meals and reduced servings.

But with smaller portions comes lower nutrient intake, meaning that maintaining muscle mass can be a challenge – in fact, some studies have shown that around 40-60% of total weight loss from GLP-1 usage results from muscle loss. As such, more and more GLP-1 agonist users are looking to get a full dose of nutrients in quick, small bites.

Weight management = a growing need

% of consumers who have bought proteins amino acid supplementation to manage their weight.ⁱⁱⁱ





"At FrieslandCampina Ingredients, we know how to set the bar – literally. With more GLP-1 agonists users seeking smaller, controlled portions, there's a revitalised demand for bars and snacks that deliver satiety, nutrition and indulgence in every bite. Our high-quality premium protein ingredients, from whey to caseinates designed to create a softer texture in bars while maximising shelf life, can help you deliver both functional benefits and a sensory experience that keeps consumers coming back."

This is creating a new demand for craving control products that deliver essential nutrition, such as protein, in smarter servings – from bars to shakes to coffees. In this era, the brands that create functional, convenient and indulgent formats will capture attention and loyalty from this new audience.

Jean Nyakayiru

Research Specialist - R&D
Nutrition at FrieslandCampina



Say hello to the sustained release superstar

Caseinates are a highly versatile protein ingredient, delivering a slow, steady release of amino acids to support long-lasting muscle protein synthesis. Ideal for craving-control products, they're perfect in bars, RTDs, and shakes that fit into smaller portions, while still providing satisfying texture, great taste and a powerful protein boost. With caseinates, it's easier than ever to design products that meet both functional nutrition needs and consumer expectations for indulgence and convenience.

Nutrition that evolves with you

As focus shifts from lifespan to healthspan, an increased focus on prevention over treatment means consumers are seeking nutrition that evolves with every stage of life.

Healthspan starts in the small moments – the everyday choices that shape long-term wellbeing. Consumers no longer just think in terms of life stages; they understand that daily experiences accumulate to influence their health. Commuting, late nights at work, exercise, family routines, and stress all create situational nutritional needs that evolve over time.

These micro-moments guide the nutrition choices people make today and the outcomes they experience tomorrow. Even small actions, like what we eat during the day or how we recover after exercise, contribute to long-term vitality. Everyday habits – such as including yoghurt or functional protein in meals and snacks – can positively influence microbiome health, immunity and overall resilience.



With consumers increasingly focused on prevention and small daily choices that have a big effect, these micro-moments are opportunities to make a meaningful impact. Tailored, demographic-specific nutritional solutions help consumers thrive now, while future-proofing their healthspan. They also expect nutrition they can count on – not only consistent and high quality, but backed by robust, reliable supply so their favourite products remain available on shelf all year round.



Yoghurts for every moment

Yoghurt has long been a functional favourite for consumers of all ages, and the category is booming as people look to get more nutrition from everyday 'micro-moments'. A trusted and indulgent treat, yoghurt demand is projected to accelerate, with global growth expected at a 6.6% CAGR by 2030. Its creamy, comforting taste, combined with its versatility as a carrier for beneficial ingredients, makes it an ideal vehicle for an easy nutrition boost to support a healthy and active lifestyle.

FAQ: How can high-protein yoghurts avoid graininess or thickness?

High-protein yoghurts can face challenges like graininess or thickness. Nutri Whey™ ProHeat is a microparticulated whey protein that unlocks smoother, richer high-protein yoghurts by overcoming common formulation barriers such as excessive viscosity or graininess. The result: indulgent, easy-to-consume spoonable and drinkable protein yoghurts with exceptional texture and elevated nutritional credentials.

Innovation inspiration: Yoghurt as...



...a supercharged spoonable snack! A spoonable protein yoghurt provides a mini power-up, helping to curb hunger and support muscle function during study, work or busy afternoons, whether you're at home or at your desk.



... a drive-by drinkable delight! High protein yoghurts in drinkable formats can be consumed on-the-go, providing convenient sip-sized nutrition, anywhere and everywhere.

The fibre frontier

Fibre is back – and it’s cooler than ever. Now, consumers want tailored digestive support.

Gut health may be mainstream, but fibre is the new frontier. Once confined to ‘boring’ bran flakes and old-school health foods, fibre has broken free from its stereotypes to become a hero nutrient in modern wellness. Scroll through social media and you’ll see it everywhere – the viral trend of ‘fibre-maxxing’, where consumers aim to meet (or exceed) their daily fibre goals, has taken over feeds and fridges alike. But it’s no longer just about how much fibre people consume – it’s about what kind.

With a new wave of social media ‘gut experts’, consumers are increasingly aware that the gut microbiome is the cornerstone of total well-being. This organ and ecosystem act as the body’s central hub, with wide-reaching influence throughout the body, providing a gateway for innovative solutions that unlock better overall physical and mental health.^{viii}

54%

of global consumers familiar with fibre associate it with aiding digestive health.

20%

of consumers have looked to increase their intake of fibre-rich food in the last 12 months.^{xiv}



“As this understanding grows – consumers are looking for different fibres that do more than aid digestion, but influence overall well-being through the gut–brain, gut–immune and gut– muscle axes. Brands can harness this momentum by adding science-backed prebiotic fibres like galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS) to functional foods to help consumers truly max their axes.”

Marieke Schoemaker

Research Specialist - R&D
Nutrition at FrieslandCampina



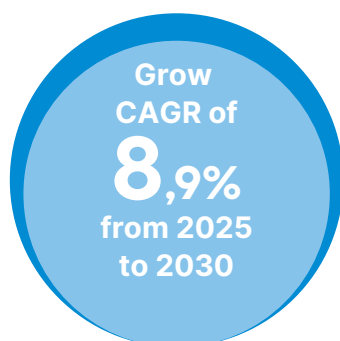
Help consumers get their daily dose – and then some – with functional foods.

Today’s consumers want fibres that do more than just keep things moving. Functional ingredients like galacto-oligosaccharides support both gut health and mental well-being. Make it easy – and enjoyable – for consumers to get their daily dose everyday snacks and drinks like prebiotic-enhanced teas or protein-rich bites, combining fun and functionality for this generation of healthy snackers and fibre fanatics.

Soft drinks, hard benefits

Hydration has long been a cornerstone of well-being – now consumers want benefits beyond quenching thirst.

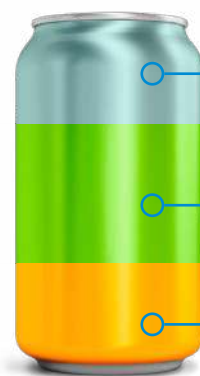
Hydration is having its glow-up. Once a wellness basic, it's now a foundation of performance, focus and long-term vitality. Yet, research shows around 70% of consumers still don't feel properly hydrated – and they're ready for change. A new wave of consumers is redefining what it means to stay hydrated. One in three now link hydration directly to nutrition, and they're thirsty for more than just plain water. They want flavour, function and feel-good benefits in every gulp.



The global functional drinks market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 8.9% from 2025 to 2030.^{xii}

Welcome to the era of Hydration+. Hydration is no longer just about quenching thirst – it's about nourishing the whole body, one drink at a time.

What drinks are consumers craving?



Clear protein waters that power recovery.

Sparkling prebiotic sodas that boost gut health.

Vitamin-infused drinks that refresh and refuel.

In a world of multi-benefit drinks, single-benefit waters just don't make the cut. Today's consumers expect more – beverages that hydrate, support holistic health goals, and are a joy to drink.



The secret to soft drink success lies in smart ingredient choices. Brands that blend efficacy with enjoyment can transform every sip into a moment of wellness. From functional coffees and teas to sparkling sodas, vitamin waters and protein-enhanced drinks, the category offers endless possibilities to meet today's multi-benefit consumer demands.

Our Nutri Whey™ Clear is the ideal solution for brands looking to make a splash with a crisp, sparkling, protein-packed drink that hydrates and fuels. Perfect for consumers looking for functional benefits without compromising taste or texture, it's a versatile addition to any beverage lineup.



The age of smart nutrition

We're living in an era of unprecedented innovation – AI is transforming how we think about the food we eat, while medical breakthroughs like GLP-1s are redefining what 'diet' means altogether.

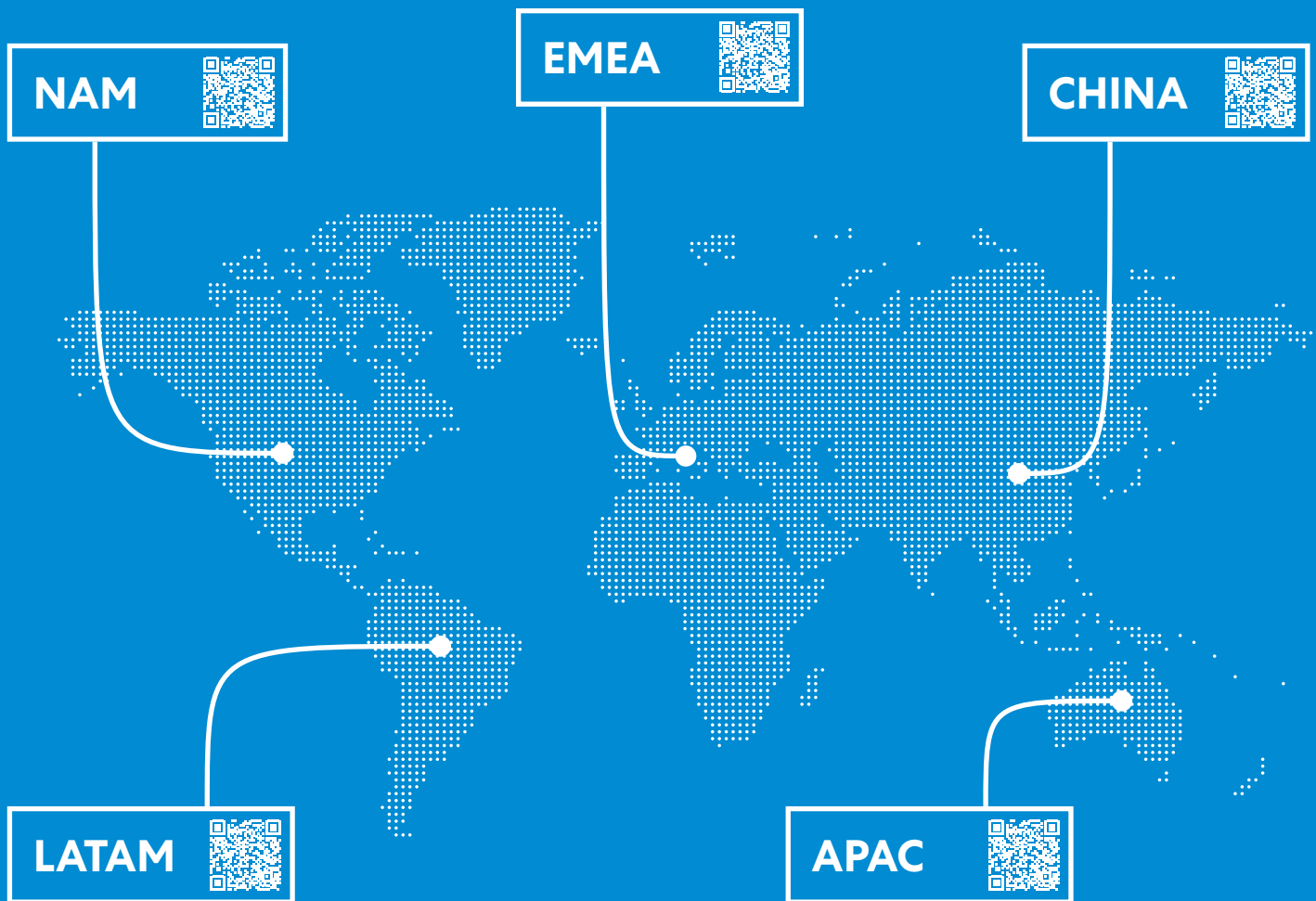
- ⁱ Innova Market Insights, Functional Ingredients Trends: Global Market Overview, 2025
- ⁱⁱ SPINS, 2025
- ⁱⁱⁱ FMCG Gurus, 2025
- ^{iv} Neeland IJ, Linge J, Birkenfeld AL. Changes in lean body mass with glucagon-like peptide-1-based therapies and mitigation strategies. *Diabetes Obes Metab*. 2024 Sep;26 Suppl 4:16-27. doi: 10.1111/dom.15728. Epub 2024 Jun 27. PMID: 38937282.
- ^v Reitelseder et al., *Am J Physiol Endocrinol Metab*, 2011
- ^{vi} Lacroix, M., Bos, C., Léonil, J., Airinei, G., Luengo, C., Daré, S., Benamouzig, R., Fouillet, H., Fauquant, J., Tomé, D. and Gaudichon, C. (2006). Compared with casein or total milk protein, digestion of milk soluble proteins is too rapid to sustain the anabolic postprandial amino acid requirement. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 84(5), pp.1070–1079. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/84.5.1070.
- ^{vii} Global Market Insights, Yoghurt Market Size, 2024
- ^{viii} Mousa JJ, et al. The gut microbiome: a key player in the complexity of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). *Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience*. 2022;16:873226.
- ^{ix} FMCG Gurus, 2025
- ^x FMCG Gurus, Hydration matters, 2025
- ^{xi} FMCG Gurus, Hydration matters, 2025
- ^{xii} Grand View Research, Functional drinks market (2025-2030)

Armed with more information than ever, consumers are hungry for more. They're becoming increasingly savvy about the benefits of functional foods and beverages – and they're demanding more from every bite and drop: more benefits, more precision, more impact.

And as consumers get smarter, nutrition has to get smarter too. In this fast-moving landscape, the brands that win are those that evolve. By pairing proven, trusted ingredients with functional, feel-good formats, brands can capture attention and loyalty.

As a leader in protein and prebiotics, we're ready to help you stay ahead with the ingredient and application expertise you need to create your next knockout formulation. Get in touch to tap into the trends shaping 2026 and beyond.





We have experts all around the world who are ready to help you bring your next nutritional innovation to life. Get in touch with our experienced team in your market.



Sustainability: producing in balance with the planet.

frieslandcampina.com/sustainability/



From grass to glass: we manage the entire chain.

frieslandcampina.com/about-us/from-grass-to-glass/



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THE INSIDE MATTERS

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