

Reformulation case studies

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Expert View: Leatherhead Food Research

From surveying our consumer panels, we know that a healthy diet is becoming increasingly important to people. Leatherhead Food Research's recent questionnaire revealed that 44% of UK consumers are trying to eat less sugar, 8% are trying to eat more protein, 5% are trying to exclude gluten and 6% are trying to cut dairy from their diet. However reformulation is not easy.

Reformulation has an impact on flavour profiles, sweetness profiles and many elements of texture, colour and visual appeal. This means that consumers will lose those characteristics they are looking for in a product when the sugar is simply removed or replaced with sweeteners.

Sugars affect many properties of foods, as well as adding shelf-life stability and food preservation. For example in biscuits and cakes, sugars affects starch gelatinisation which alters how it cooks; so a reduction in sugar will affect the product's textural properties and how well it holds the air on baking. Understanding the science behind these changes is key to successful reformulation. Food and drink regulations also need to be considered so that products are legally described.

Consumer data comes from Leatherhead Food Research; nationally representative survey with 2,069 UK consumers, September 2016