

Press Release

New Tereos sweeteners research reveals taste is key for consumers, ingredient labelling and naturalness follow

Paris, June 21st 2021. – Consumer research commissioned by Tereos and conducted by leading market research group IFOP, reveals just how important taste is to consumers – but also shows they care about what they eat and its origin – even ahead of price.

This study reaffirms Tereos in its offer to extend the possibilities and options of its customers to meet consumer expectations. Tereos offers a wide range of solutions ranging from locally produced organic sugar to fibres and proteins, while including lower calorie or even zero calorie sweetening alternatives such as stevia extracts. Combined with its reformulation expertise, Tereos meet consumer expectations, reflected in this study.

Good for me, good for the planet

Over 6,000 online interviews* of consumers aged from 18 to 70 years old were conducted across six European countries (France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Netherlands and United Kingdom) which uncovered consumers' knowledge and perception of sweeteners – and what drives their purchasing behaviours.

It is no surprise that pleasure remains the key purchasing factor for consumers buying sweet goods, with taste the top driver for purchasing decisions. However, close behind and ahead of price comes detailed ingredient labelling, and the perceived naturalness of the sweetener used.

European consumers are indicating their wish to buy healthier and more sustainable products and are paying closer attention to their sugar intake, with 55% of European consumers checking the sugar content of their purchases.

Tereos Marketing Director Guillaume Planque said: “The idea of ‘good for me, good for the planet’ is now absolutely mainstream and plays an important role in purchasing decisions – consumers want to know what’s in the food they eat, and where it comes from, even ahead of price.

When consumers know the origin of sugar, a large majority recognise its naturalness, which is further strengthened when it is organic. This survey also highlights how local has become a priority.”

As part of the research conducted in November 2020, consumers were asked their views on a range of sweeteners like sugar; stevia; liquid sweeteners (fructose/glucose) polyols and High Intensity Sweeteners (HIS).

Top for taste and naturalness came sugar

Purchasing reasons associated with sugar as a sweetener confirm previously identified consumer trends related to naturalness, localism (in the case of domestically grown beet sugar versus imported cane sugar) and positive environmental impact. In this context, the research illustrates how European grown organic beet sugar comes first in terms of consumers' priorities versus other sucrose alternatives when origin is indicated.

After sugar, stevia is the best-known sweetening ingredient

Recognised by 83% of respondents, far above other high intensity sweeteners (HIS), and is particularly well-known in Germany. Stevia also has a positive image, with 54% considering it natural. This is the main reason it stands apart in the HIS category with the primary reason for its consumption being naturalness, with Italian and Spanish consumers having the highest opinion of stevia in Europe.

Positive opinion for liquid sweeteners

When it comes to liquid sweeteners, despite consumers' limited knowledge of them compared to sugar, opinion is good, and they score highly on taste. For 90% of respondents the presence of liquid sweeteners in a product is not necessarily a concern, and only 10% state they would not consume liquid sweeteners. Further information on their plant-based origin and the manufacturing process would help them better understand these ingredients.

Guillaume Planque said: "the survey revealed significant differences within European consumers towards ingredients appreciation. For instance, consumers in Italy and the Netherlands have the highest opinion of cereal liquid sweeteners which are recognized for their good taste. In Germany, consumers score Fructose, known as "Fruchzucker", literally sugar of the fruit, higher than sucrose, showing again that names and labelling influence consumer perceptions."

Views of other high intensity sweeteners

Polyols and synthetic HIS are barely known by consumers, and where they are known, they tend to have a negative perception. Acesulfame K and sucralose are associated with health fears, and in France and Spain sucralose is seen as an addictive substance. Aspartame is perceived negatively by consumers and seen as harmful more than other alternatives, while it is also associated with bad taste.

Planque concludes: "Commissioning research like this, focusing on consumers trends and needs, provides us with valuable insight as a basis to continue the development of one of the broadest ranges of sweetening solutions on the market. This provides Tereos' customers with options for their consumers spanning sugar, HIS, and full- to mid-range, and zero calorie alternatives using stevia extracts. This range, combined with our Sweet&You reformulation service, allows our customers to meet their consumers' demands for local products made in a sustainable way."

About Tereos

With a long-term vision of valuing agricultural raw materials and developing quality products for the food, health and renewable energy sectors, Tereos is a leader in the sugar, alcohol and starch markets. The Group's commitments to society and the environment contribute to the company's performance in the long term while strengthening its contribution as a responsible player. The cooperative group Tereos is a union of more than 12,000 Cooperative members and has recognized know-how in the processing of beet, sugarcane, cereals, alfalfa and potatoes. Through 48 industrial sites, a presence in 18 countries and the commitment of its 22 300 employees, Tereos supports its customers close to their markets with a broad and complementary range of products. In 2019-20, the Group posted €4.5 bn turnover.

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