



FROM NATURALNESS TO “CLEAN LABEL”

Currently, naturalness represents the greatest demand among consumers. An innovation involving naturalness is a product whose natural composition is mentioned, valued or explained in order to reassure the consumer about its health benefits.



Organic products offer this re-insurance, but they are no longer enough to convince those consumers who are constantly looking for even more natural products to include in their diet. We have moved from the demand for naturalness in the form of certified organic products to so-called “clean label” products: products that offer the consumer a guarantee not only of safety, but also that no disreputable third party has been worked on their development. Thus, the concept of “clean label” is broader than the concept of naturalness, as it also includes humanitarian values (a respect for the human body in all its forms and a refusal to promote the consumption of products that exploit human beings) and environmental values (addressing ecological concerns, and respecting fauna, flora or the natural environment). The “clean label” offer relates to the consumer and their personal health, at both an immediate and a wider environmental level, such as their community, and, more generally, the whole planet, with a commitment to products respecting sustainable development. Thus, the benefits of certified biological innovations, which are meant to be “clean label” go beyond the simple expectations of consumers by integrating them into a more holistic framework. In order to promote innovation in the “clean label” segment, XTC has >



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> identified several levers of innovation, which can be found in the frozen produce category, for example.

PROMOTION OF ORIGIN

Manufacturers must showcase the origin of their innovation. This can be achieved with regard to the products' ingredients, but also their location or manufacturing process. The manufacturing process can be founded on knowledge rooted in a particular region, which is automatically associated with the product concerned. In order to highlight an origin, the product can also be derived from a traditional, regional or national recipe.

Emphasizing origin provides a guarantee to consumers about the naturalness of the product: it did not come from anywhere, nor did it travel halfway across the world. Its production is assigned to a known geographic location, thereby opposing the anonymity of certain agro-food products whose production lines may be stretched over several continents. This first element of naturalness is supplemented by other positive claims, playing on the idea of humanitarianism and ecology: humanitarianism, because, by purchasing an original product, the consumer economically supports the population of a particular geographical region with whom they have an affinity; ecology, because what is local, regional or national involves less transportation than a product with an unspecified origin (often the product travels halfway around the world), meaning a smaller ecological footprint. These two additional elements transform the emphasis upon origin into a lever, which is representative of the “clean label” approach, along with the desire to support naturalness as well as humanitarian or ecological efforts. Some examples of innovations, which have been identified around the world, are: potato gratin made with potatoes from the Dauphiné region in France, cream and 100% French Emmental; breaded chicken nuggets with chickens of 100% British origin, emphasized by the presence of the Union Jack on the packaging (especially

in order to counteract the controversy surrounding the massive export of Brazilian chickens); a range of dishes made with local seasonal ingredients, formulated in partnership with small farmers from East End of Long Island in the USA; and ice cream from Brazil, developed with traditional Brazilian fruit grown in an environmentally sustainable manner.

ARTISANAL MANUFACTURING PROCESS

Another lever involves using an artisanal, rather than an industrial, manufacturing process in order to highlight the natural and ecological appearance of the product. Of course, the price is impacted by a more expensive manufacturing process, which is industrially less efficient. Nevertheless, the consumer is willing to pay more for certain in-demand products. Thus, the supply of frozen organic pizza has been enhanced by references to wood-fired or stone-cooked pizza, as well as more natural and non-industrial manufacturing processes. Meanwhile, a range of slow-cooked, non-industrial dishes, which maintain the flavor of the food, has been launched in the USA and Europe.

PRODUCT FORMULATED "WITHOUT"

The "clean label" theme is intimately linked to the dynamics of the term "without": showcasing what the product is formulated "without", while using the marketing of "less", which, in the end, seeks to offer the consumer a better product. The idea is to do better with less: better for the consumer, and also better for the planet, with the use of fewer ingredients considered as "harmful". The products formulated "without" invite the customer to remove from their diet an ingredient that is bad for their health and the environment, reflecting again the idea that the consumer is more than someone simply putting food into their body. The dynamics of the term "without" is scalable and follows a certain trend: that is, certain ingredients, which are considered to be more harmful than others, ought to be removed.

Sugar, the latest ingredient to be considered as harmful, is being progressively removed, especially from categories that have historically contained it (such as ice cream or pastry). Sugar is considered as "damaging" by the consumer for two reasons. In the subconscious of the consumer, it is associated with many eating disorders, which is more or less truthful (being overweight, obesity, sugar addiction, drowsiness, headaches etc.). Secondly, in the consumer's imagination, sugar is a product that is too industrially processed. A flavor that is too sweet is inconsistent with the consumer's concept of naturalness, which tends to infer more bitter, acidic or spicy flavors. In terms of innovation, there is a form of ice cream, which guarantees to contain no refined or added sugar, or even natural alternatives to sugar (yacon syrup, agave syrup or coconut sugar), thereby involving a lower glyce-mic index.)

Regarding the latest ingredients considered as harmful, we find many references to "without palm oil", "without MSG", "GMO-free" or "without nitrites and nitrates".



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ANIMAL WELFARE

Animal welfare is a "clean label" promise, which is associated with meat that is better for health (without antibiotics or growth hormones), addresses environmental concerns (GMO-free breed, no soy, bred in the open air), or promotes animal welfare (better breeding conditions, vegetarian diet). Whether these are "rough" or processed meat products, the "clean label" in respect of animal welfare has become a staple for this line over the past year. As such, you can now find "clean label" chicken nuggets, steaks, beef burgers, Swedish beef meatballs and even pepperoni, which is used as "toppings" for pizza. Moreover, the entire meat industry needs to embrace the demand for "clean label" in respect of animal welfare ■



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