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#ISM #ISMFamilY #sweetweekcologne

ISM 2026 on expansion course - new formats and expanded event programme strengthen the leading international trade fair

High demand: Exhibition space booked already exceeds previous event +++ Premiere in 2026: ISM Ingredients launches as an independent format +++ ISM Opening Night forms the festive prelude of the fair +++ ISM Start-up Pitches Award puts the spotlight on innovations +++ Diverse new programme highlights set new focuses in terms of content

ISM 2026 is sending a strong signal to the international sweets and snacks industry a few weeks before the opening of the trade fair. With around 1,600 exhibitors from 74 countries as well as exhibition space bookings that already exceed the final figures of the previous event, the leading global trade fair is underscoring its ongoing momentum and global relevance. Together with ProSweets Cologne and the new trade fair format ISM Ingredients, ISM covers the entire value chain - from raw materials, to the production and packaging, through to the entire spectrum of sweets and snacks products. The focus is on a high-class, interactive event programme that specifically promotes the exchange, knowledge transfer and new impulses.

"ISM is using the 55th edition to further reinforce its position as a key driver of content for the industry. New formats like ISM Ingredients, a clear focus on relevant future themes and a top-class event programme, turn ISM into a central orientation platform for the entire market. With the aid of targeted eventisation measures we are consistently further developing the trade fair experience and creating additional points of contact to attract new target groups," said Sabine Schommer, Director of ISM.

Festive prelude and networking highlights

The ISM Opening Night forms the festive prelude of ISM on 1 February 2026 at the new Confex at the Cologne fairgrounds. The event is open to all participants of ISM, ISM Ingredients and ProSweets Cologne and creates the opportunity for exchange and networking in a relaxed atmosphere. Furthermore, the ISM Award will be presented during the ISM Opening Night, which once again honours an outstanding personality from the sweets and snacks industry. In 2025, the Award went to Ulrich Zuenelli, Managing Partner of Loacker. The winner of the prestigious award for 2026 will only be announced at the start of ISM Opening Night.

The personal exchange continues on the second day of the fair with the ProSweets Cologne Party. In addition, the Lab5 Party presented by LIMITD will take place on 3 February at the Talks & Tasting Stage - with drinks, snacks and a live DJ.



ISM
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www.ism-cologne.com

Your contact:
Patrick Schmitz
Tel.
+49 221 821-3083
e-mail
p.schmitz@koelnmesse.de

Koelnmesse GmbH
Messeplatz 1
50679 Köln
P.O. Box 21 07 60
50532 Köln
Germany
Tel. +49 221 821-0
Fax +49 221 821-2574
www.koelnmesse.com

Executive Board:
Gerald Böse (President and Chief Executive Officer)
Oliver Frese

Chairman of the Supervisory Board:
Mayor of the City of Cologne
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Headquarters and place of jurisdiction:
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Expert Stage, Talks & Tasting Stage and Start-up Pitches

The Expert Stage on the Central Boulevard at the entrance to Hall 10.1 serves as a content hub for the trade fair. In conjunction with the participation of the knowledge partners, Innova Market Insights and Euromonitor International, and the DLG the programme addresses key industry themes - from sustainability and digitalisation to artificial intelligence and the rising prices for raw materials as well as the lack in skilled workers. Case studies and examples of best practice provide practical insights along the entire industrial value chain.

The Talks & Tasting Stage is also returning to Hall 10.1 and its scope and interactivity will be further expanded in 2026. The stage programme combines product tastings and creator presentations with lectures and particularly addresses marketing and innovation professionals.

The ISM Start-up Pitches Award is a new programme highlight. The award will be conferred on 2 February 2026 for the first time. Start-ups will present their business models and product ideas to a high-profile panel of experts. The pitches will be hosted by Robert Kronekker - food entrepreneur, investor & start-up mentor. The winning start-up will be distinguished on stage and will receive prize-money in addition to the award certificate.

World record at ISM: KuchenMeister presents the biggest croissant in the world.

A special highlight awaits the visitors at KuchenMeister's stand in Hall 11.2, Stand D11/E18. On Sunday, 1 February 2026 from 1:00 p.m. on, the biggest croissant in the world will be measured and the official world record registered. The world record-breaking croissant can also be tasted, and deliciously filled croissants can be personally decorated.

Lab5 by ISM, ISM Functional Sweets and Ingredients under focus

The alliance between ISM, ISM Ingredients and ProSweets Cologne will become a spatial experience in Hall 10.1. Visitors can follow all the process steps from the procurement of the raw materials through to the final packaging. Also located here: Lab5 by ISM, which gathers together more than 30 start-ups and scale-ups from 16 countries, around 20 providers of trend snacks and 30 exhibitors of handcrafted specialities in the specialised trade section. Lab5 by ISM is enhanced by the new theme section "ISM Functional Sweets", which picks up on the growing trend towards functional sweets with an added health benefits.

Further content-related highlights include the Special Show "Ingredients - Functional and Climate-Conscious" as well as the New Product Showcase, where new products from the international sweets and snacks industry will be presented. The New Product Showcase Award on 1 February and the ISM Consumer Award on 2 February 2026, both of which will be held on the Talks & Tasting Stage, recognise the innovation achievements of the exhibitors.

New this year: ISM Ingredients 2026

For the first time ISM Ingredients, an independent platform for the providers of raw materials, ingredients and semi-finished products, is enhancing the trade fair

portfolio for sweets and snacks. The fact that the new format is already completely fully-booked in advance underlines the high demand for exchange and transparency in the upstream value chain. Closely linked with ISM and ProSweets Cologne in terms of contents and location, the result is a trade fair alliance that systematically brings suppliers, machine and packaging manufacturers together with the industry and trade.

Parallel to the expansion of the exhibitor offer, ISM and ProSweets Cologne are raising their profile as international content and innovation platforms. A further developed, interactive event programme with new awards as well as expanded tasting and creator formats further heighten their role as key drivers of innovation for the global sweets and snacks industry.

The full event programme of ISM can be found here: <https://www.ism-cologne.com/events/event-search/>

Koelnmesse - worldwide trade fairs for the food industry and food production:

Koelnmesse is an international leader in organizing global trade fairs for the food and beverage industry as well as for food production. With events such as Anuga, Anuga FoodTec, ISM, and ProSweets Cologne, Koelnmesse covers a wide spectrum - from ingredients to production, packaging, finished products, and the latest technologies and innovations. These globally renowned trade fairs, held in Cologne, Germany, set benchmarks in their respective sectors. In addition, Koelnmesse organizes numerous industry-specific trade fairs in key markets worldwide, including Brazil, China, India, Italy, Japan, Colombia, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates. Through these global activities, Koelnmesse offers its clients tailored events and leading regional trade fairs across various markets, providing a foundation for sustainable international business. Koelnmesse is thus ideally positioned to drive innovation and development in both the food industry and food production.

Further information: <https://www.ism-cologne.com/fair/industry-trade-fairs/>

The next events:

ISM and ISM Ingredients - The world's largest trade fair for confectionery, snacks, and their ingredients., Cologne 01.02. - 04.02.2026

ProSweets Cologne - The international supplier fair for the sweets and snacks industry, Cologne 01.02. - 04.02.2026

THAIFEX - HOREC Asia - Southeast Asia's leading Hospitality & Food Service Trade Show, Bangkok 11.03. - 13.03.2026

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Your contact:

Patrick Schmitz
Public and Media Relations Manager

Koelnmesse GmbH
Messeplatz 1
50679 Cologne
Germany
Tel +49 221 821-3083
E-Mail: p.schmitz@koelnmesse.de
www.koelnmesse.com