

No. 5 / January 2026, Cologne
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Sweets and snacks that can do "more": ISM Ingredients makes market trends visible

Around 80 companies from 27 countries expected for the premiere of ISM Ingredients +++ Number of exhibiting companies has nearly tripled +++ Plant based as an innovation motor, with a focus on functional sweets

From 1 to 4 February 2026, ISM Ingredients brings the leading players of the ingredients industry to Cologne and presents the latest trends and developments for sweet and snack producers. From the individual recipe to market success: around 80 exhibitors from 27 countries will present a comprehensive portfolio of antioxidant and vitamin-rich fruit and vegetable extracts, vegetable proteins, fibres and innovative ingredients for flavour, colour and texture in Hall 10.1 that not only promote healthier nutrition, but also offer multisensory experiences.

People who reach for bonbons, fruit gums or chocolate today usually expect more than just sweet enjoyment. The trend themes of naturalness and health are becoming more decisive when purchasing sweets and snacks. Especially the claim "plant based" has developed into a quality feature at the point of sale. The demand for vegan and protein-rich snacks is increasing continually, and "plant based" is one of the most acknowledged and confidence-inspiring labels for consumers - irrespective of their lifestyle. At the same time, consumers are searching for new and refreshing taste experiences.

"Those who understand the current trends and invest in a targeted fashion in healthy product innovations will position themselves successfully over the long term in a market with enormous growth potential", says Guido Hentschke. Whether products without added sugar, with more fibre and less fat: the call for more healthy sweet and snack options can't be overlooked, according to the Director of ISM Ingredients and ProSweets Cologne, but is at the same time linked "with challenges in terms of recipes and process technology."

Global stage for ingredients and raw materials

Together with ISM and ProSweets Cologne, ISM Ingredients presents itself at the beginning of February as the biggest global industry get-together of the sweets and snacks sector. Whether in the form of energy, boosting or so-called super ingredients - functionality is another megatrend at the heart of the new B2B platform, which is celebrating its premiere this year. A total of 80 companies from 27 countries are presenting natural ingredients like granulates, powders and whole pieces of fruit and vegetables, plant-based proteins, fibres as well as ingredients for more flavour, colour and texture on the Cologne fair grounds. Hentschke: "With an extensive selection of functional ingredients, the exhibitors set benchmarks in the



ISM Ingredients
01.02. - 04.02.2026
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reformulation process and enable innovative product concepts that harmonise colour, texture and flavour." Manufacturers can thus achieve a better classification with systems for nutrition labelling like the Nutri-Score.

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The aim of the new trade fair format is to maximise the synergies between the suppliers of raw materials and the manufacturers of sweets and snacks and create a platform for innovation and sustainable production. The market demand confirms the concept impressively: the originally planned areas were completely booked at an early date, and additional capacity had to be created. In comparison with the previous Ingredients segment of ProSweets Cologne 2025, the exhibition area more than doubled, while the number of exhibitors nearly tripled with 80 companies.

Whether Brenntag, Calowry, Cargill, Capol, Döhler, Exberry by GNT, Olam Food Ingredients (ofi), Pfeifer & Langen or SternEnzym: "With their innovative product concepts and first class ingredients, the exhibitors of ISM Ingredients promote healthier nutrition and ensure multi-sensory experiences in sweets and snacks", says Hentschke. Exhibitors and visitors of ISM and ProSweets Cologne can take part in guided tours through ISM Ingredients in order to get to know the entire bandwidth of semifinished products, raw materials and ingredients - thus resulting in promising synergy effects.

Function and enjoyment in balance

Another highlight will be the "Special Show Ingredients - Functional and Climate-Conscious", which will shift the focus over around 200 square metres to new recipes, modern processing technologies and exciting product ideas from all over the globe - selected by the innovation agency, Haute Innovation. "In addition to functional ingredients and sustainable raw materials, innovative food tech solutions and unusual tastes will be presented that provide new impulses for the sweets and snacks industry", says Diana Drewes, bio-designer at Haute Innovation. Functional ingredients with natural properties that promote health, drinkable snacks and of course exotic flavours from around the world will also inspire astonishment - and that for good reason.

This is because, from protein-rich fruit gums through energising hard caramel with guarana extract to cereal bars with superfruits: "The top 10 trends show that the markets for sweets and snacks are increasingly concentrating on improved nutritional value and sustainability, powered by consumer demand for healthier and more environmentally-friendly options", confirms Hannah Dammann, Senior Account Manager at Innova Market Insights. "This also includes the development of snacks rich in nutrients that speak to health-conscious consumers", her colleague Beatrice Quarella, also Account Manager at Innova Market Insights, a leading worldwide provider of market information, adds. On the Expert Stage, the knowledge hub for the industrial value creation chain of the sweets and snacks industry, the two experts present the "Top Trends in Sweets and Snacks Unwrapped". Lectures and discussions on themes like raw materials procurement, reformulation or packaging will take place there for the entire duration of the trade fair.

From the idea to the finished product

Innovative raw materials, improved recipes, new products: the market for sweets is

on the move like never before. The enduring trend towards a healthy way of life expresses itself not least in adding active agents with health benefits, so-called nutraceuticals, to fruit gums and hard candies, which can be sold as OTC (over the counter) products without a prescription. In contrast with other dosage forms, OTC sweets need to be more than only pharmacologically convincing. Bitter or astringent tastes require optimally coordinated aromas to mask them without impairing the release of the active agents. The central task for the producers of sweets consists of combining functionality and enjoyment.

Lozenges, for example, are either hard candies or soft lozenges. Both formats take effect in that they slowly dissolve in the mouth. This balance is only successfully achieved with precisely controlled cooking and mixing arcs as well as reproducible temperature settings. The relation between the sweet mass and the active ingredient must remain constant over the entire production duration. Where sensible, encapsulation and coating technologies are deployed, for example, for optimising flavour and stabilising the active agents. The manufacturers of sweets find the high quality ingredients for their functional products at ISM Ingredients, the necessary technical know-how at ProSweets Cologne. Intelligently conceived of system configurations process the OTC-supplements in both a liquid and a powder form. This is a trend that is reflected in new systems for powder-free production. With shaping in polycarbonate moulds, a clean, efficient system technology is available for the manufacture of functional fruit gums that has its roots in the moulding of chocolate. From the initial idea through the development of appropriate casting processes to large-scale production: visitors to the Cologne fair grounds will find solutions that cover the entire spectrum of cast OTC sweets.

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