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What's happening in sweeteners

The key ingredients in today's sweeteners are high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), high-intensity and non-nutritive sweeteners, and cane sugar. HFCS continues to play a role in food product development, despite controversies surrounding its use. Similarly, controversies continue to exist regarding most high-intensity sweeteners. Work being done on all types of sweeteners continues to increase, outpacing new product development as a rule. In the following report, Mintel International Group offers insights into global trends in sweeteners.

Natural preferred over artificial

Many consumers are looking for more 'natural' alternatives and many remain concerned about 'artificial' sweeteners.

Coca-Cola's Sprite Green soda (USA) which is sweetened with Truvia. Cane sugar use is also on the rise, posting strong growth in bev-

Prevalence of sweeteners differs across regions				
Aspartame	Sucralose	Ace-K	Xylitol	Stevia
Europe	North America	Europe	Asia Pacific	Asia Pacific
Asia Pacific	Asia Pacific	Asia Pacific	Europe	Latin America
Latin America	Latin America	North America	North America	North America
North America	Europe	Latin America	Latin America	Europe

The debate over blends vs single sweeteners continues, with more blends on the horizon. Sweetener blends help to mask potential undesirable flavour notes. Blends also allow companies to combine more-expensive sweeteners with less-expensive ones. They also may potentially lessen the impact of sensitivities to certain sweeteners.

Examples of products that use blends include Lotte's Plus X gum (Japan) which is sweetened with acesulfame potassium and sucralose; and Vichy Célestins Drainocoach (France) which is a flavoured water-based beverage with plant extracts. It is sweetened with sucralose and acesulfame K.

Ace-K leads the list of sweeteners used in beverages, followed by aspartame, sucralose, saccharine and stevia extract.

The use of stevia is most prevalent in Asia where it is used primarily in snacks and non-alcoholic beverages. For many, stevia is the next big thing in sweeteners. Products that use stevia include Granix Cereal Free (Argentina), a sugar-free, cholesterol-free cereal that is sweetened with sucralose and stevia; and

erages and bakery products. Manufacturers are returning to cane sugar in response to consumer concerns about HFCS and high-intensity sweeteners. The use of cane sugar is also part of a growing 'retro' trend. Products that promote their use of cane sugar are developing into mainstream products. Although there are not that many products using cane sugar currently on the market, they meet with substantial interest. Sugar cane is used in Pepsi Raw, 'Natural Born Cola' (UK) and in Coca-Cola's Vio carbonated milk drink (USA).

What's ahead? Consumer concerns regarding weight and diet will help ensure the continued growth of high-intensity and non-nutritive sweeteners. However, this growth will be balanced by consumers' desire for more 'natural' offerings of all types.

Every new sweetener introduced into the marketplace impacts the introduction of others, but only in the short term. No matter what other fads may drive the market, taste is the most important factor in a consumer purchasing decisions.