

NATURALLY TRENDING™

2023 Food & Beverage Report



Look inside for the latest
natural food trends!

insights**NOW**

WELCOME!

to the second annual Naturally Trending™ Food & Beverage Report—your source for inspiring discoveries and enticing trends.

Recognizing it's crucial to keep a pulse on the latest trends for clients' long-term success, InsightsNow and CuliNEX once again joined forces to case the 3,100+ booths at Natural Products Expo West (NPEW) looking to capture what is new and innovative—and stood out among the crowd.

We met face-to-face with hundreds of the hottest companies to learn about their food and beverage product innovations. Speaking with company founders—and their marketing teams—we gained a deep understanding of what was developed and why.





Dave Lundahl, CEO

insightsNOW

“Naturally Trending™ was created so brands can keep a pulse on the dynamic marketplace—so they can develop, innovate and position products in context to today’s reality—as well as come together to improve the world. From sustainability innovation to cutting-edge branding, leading and reflecting changes in the natural products industry powers consumer love and drives business success.”



Mark Crowell, CEO

culinEX

“NPEW is the place where the hottest trends and revolutionary new products are born. We’re bringing to you innovative product examples and delicious offerings we tasted and tried—from mouth-watering plant-based options to unique food flavors that stood out as the coolest and most creative natural food and beverage trends shaking up the industry.”



THE TOP FIVE TRENDS

TASTE IS KING

Exceptional taste is now a prerequisite to compete in the natural products industry. How can your food and beverage products tempt consumers' tastebuds? See page 5.

DIVERSIFICATION OF PLANT-BASED APPLICATIONS

A narrower focus on specific applications is advancing plant-based innovation. What does it take to compete and innovate in this rapidly changing space? See page 8.

NEW AND GROWING MARKETING CLAIMS

Crowded categories are beginning to differentiate through marketing claims. Take a look at the trends to see what is resonating with natural products customers! See page 11.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Many brands are still leading the industry with robust sustainability practices. As sustainability continues to grow in importance, how can you keep up? See page 16.

BRANDING TO DIFFERENTIATE

The desire to stand out was evident with new unique and bold brand elements. Standing out to the right target markets in the crowded natural product space is key! See page 19.

BEYOND THE TRENDS

For additional context, we close this issue by highlighting several challenges and issues brands should be aware of—venture capital funding, product affordability, consumer demand comprehension and more. Learn with us how to navigate the current environment and plan for what's coming! See page 22.



TASTE IS KING

One of the best parts of Natural Products Expo West (NPEW) was sampling incredibly tasty foods and beverages—so many products blew up our tastebuds that we had to include this feature. In fact, InsightsNow recently conducted a study on the aspirations of primary shoppers in the United States. We found that only 32% of the shoppers would sacrifice taste to buy more environmentally-friendly products. What we saw at NPEW shows that brands are willing to oblige the majority of consumers (68%) who will not sacrifice taste to buy more sustainable products. Basically, you can taste your sustainable cake, and eat it too!

Here are some of the flavor explosions we discovered...

TASTY PRODUCTS AT NPEW



We couldn't get enough of this tasty **Eat the Change® Mushroom Jerky**. This planet-friendly company created these nutrient dense "jerky" snacks in five incredibly tasty flavors: Sea Salt + Cracked Pepper, Hickory Smokehouse, Maple Mustard, Teriyaki Ginger, and Habanero BBQ.

eatthechange.com



Sip Herbals Restorative Herbal "Coffee" was not short on flavor at the show. This coffee substitute featured a taste for every palette, with the coffee-flavored Signature Roast, Salted Maple Blondie, Dirty Chai, Royal Mocha and French Vanilla. Yum!

sipherbals.com



We checked out **Brianna's® Organic Salad Dressings** bursting with their rich and delicious famous flavors like Mango, Honey Ginger, Apple Cider, Poppy Seed and French Vinaigrette. No artificial flavors, synthetic colors, chemicals or preservatives in this dressing.

www.briannas.com/organics



And what's a review of taste without trying some chocolates? **Pocket's Chocolates™** are oat milk chocolate snacks in fun flavors. We checked out their chocolate coated Almonds in Japanese Matcha, Black Sesame, Mango Yuzu and Vietnamese Coffee flavors.

pocketschocolates.com



MyFOREST™ Foods was at the show with their farm-grown meatless mycelium mushroom bacon, a certified plant-based product with claims that it tastes like meat and has a texture like meat (We tried it and it does!). Very tasty!

myforestfoods.com/mybacon

SUMMARY: TASTE IS KING

It's clear natural products companies are getting wise to taste being key to repeat purchases. And with many consumers seeking sustainability—but not willing to sacrifice taste—companies are innovating in a flavorful direction. New natural products we found hitting the market are so delicious, it's clear that taste and sustainability can go hand-in-hand. But, while branding, packaging, and claims might draw consumers in initially, the sensory aspects of taste and flavor keep products returning to the shopping cart.

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT:

Companies must make sure their products taste delicious to keep customers coming back for more. The key to success is customer feedback. So natural product brands need to pay attention to what customers are saying, give them the tastes and flavors they crave—and, in turn, earn their loyalty.

💡 **Sip Herbals** incorporated consumer input into the beverage creation process—starting with their own friends and family—in order to make the taste the best it can be for their caffeine-free coffee alternative. They derive the flavor from roasting herbs such as Chicory, Dandelion, and Carob to bring out natural flavors and aromas that consumers love.

💡 **MyForest™ Foods** shares that their company has a focus on sustainable production practices and clean label commitment—but readily admits that “no matter how amazing our products are, we can't make a positive impact if it doesn't taste amazing!” The company has used blind taste tests, feedback surveys, focus groups, sampling and other market research approaches to make taste one of their highest priorities for MyBacon.





DIVERSIFICATION OF PLANT-BASED APPLICATIONS

The plant-based evolution continues! Once again this year at NPEW, the theme of plant-based offerings across all natural products categories was prevalent. From dairy-free cheese to meat and seafood substitutes that are indistinguishable from the real thing, plant-based alternatives are now discovered in every corner of the grocery store. This movement continues to gain momentum and diversity, as customers seek out cleaner, healthier, more sustainable options that don't sacrifice flavor or texture. It's not just a "separate category" anymore—plant-based food is everywhere, and it's here to stay.

So what's the latest in plant-based?

PLANT-BASED PRODUCTS AT NPEW



Plant-based frozen sushi?! Yes, please! This product from **Konscious™** was incredibly unique and won the “Best New Plant-Forward Product” and “Best New Frozen Product” at NPEW. The chefs at the company create plant-based seafood people choose over traditional options.

www.konscious.com



Planet Based Foods™ is on a mission to establish hemp as a nutrient dense sustainable food system that will nourish the people and rejuvenate our planet for generations to come. We tried their Original Hemp Burger while canvassing the show!

Planetbasedfoods.com



Crafty Counter's Wundereggs® were both incredible and edible—and unbelievably, not an egg. This plant-based, totally vegan hard boiled egg was one of the best analogues we've experienced—it looked, smelled and tasted just like a real hard boiled egg.

craftycounter.com



Planet Based Foods™ showcased sumptuous vegan ice creams at NPEW. These organic, sustainable frozen desserts are free from soy, gluten, dairy and GMO ingredients, and hitting store shelves this summer.

planetbasedfoods.com



Elmhurst® plant-based Barista Milks are made from a variety of different nuts like cashews, walnuts, pistachios and almonds. Best of all, they come in amazing flavors like Caramel Macchiato and Vanilla Lavender.

elmhurst1925.com



Gourmet Evolution™ makes plant-based meats like black forest ham, roasted turkey and mortadella. The company includes clean label product ingredient statements as well as strong messaging around sustainability and reducing environmental footprint.

gourmetevolutionfoods.com

SUMMARY: DIVERSIFICATION OF PLANT-BASED APPLICATIONS

At Natural Products Expo West, more than 30% of the companies we met with were plant-based. Studies at InsightsNow and beyond indicate that plant-based products can bridge the aspirational gaps of shoppers and lead to product success. However, in a crowded market, emerging plant-based foods face significant challenges in terms of claims, ingredients, positioning, pricing, and, of course, taste. An important aspect to remember is that for flexitarians, the animal-based option is always available if the taste and price of plant-based options fall short.

It's clear that plant-based innovation is moving ahead full throttle and the competition is getting more fierce in every category. Consumers are also looking to plant-based as a clean label option as well as an option that fulfills sustainability concerns. As brands move to stay competitive, more risks are being taken to enter this space, and we are seeing greater diversity in the product offerings. Our experience at NPEW shows that not only is this marketplace crowded, it is also moving fast, and brands will need to work hard to stay ahead.

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT:

According to the brands included here, market research is key to make your products into a plant-based superstar that consumers love!

💡 **Crafty Counter** looked at the whitespace in the plant-based category when developing their Wundereggs®, looking to solve a consumer pain point. For consumer feedback, they got creative and did guerrilla research by hosting sampling events, popups, chef and caterer testing, and more.

💡 **Planet Based Foods™** shares that they use a “combination of extensive research and development” to create plant-based products that are both innovative and delicious. From taste, flavor and texture studies with focus groups of potential customers during an iterative development process, Planet Based Foods put a strong emphasis on incorporating consumer input, needs and feedback to create their new products.





NEW AND GROWING MARKETING CLAIMS

Marketing claims really turned the dial at Natural Products Expo West (NPEW) this year! Three major “claims” themes emerged: allergy-free, hero ingredients and beverage.

First up, we saw lots of allergy-free food claims. From baby food to breads to free-from snacks, these new allergen-friendly items indicate how many consumers are looking for a more allergy-aware food industry. Hero ingredients—and the claims that make them appealing—took center stage in everything from kids’ snacks to fruit products. And once again, we saw incredible innovation on the beverage front. In such a crowded space, beverage brands need claims that make their products stand out. **We share some highlights in the latest marketing claims here.**

ALLERGY-FREE MARKETING CLAIMS



Every Body Eat® showcased their delicious **Cheese-Less™** thins, along with other plant-based snack thins in a variety of flavors. The company uses none of the top 14 ingredients associated with food allergies and intolerances by formulating their snacks brown rice flour and potato starch ingredients.

everybodyeating.com



Angelic Bakehouse® makes nut-free bread products that are also dairy-free, egg-free, sesame-free, soy-free and glyphosate-free made in a bakery completely free of nuts. The company uses delicious, flavorful ingredients in their products too like turmeric, beets, green chile and "all kinds of goodness."

www.angelicbakehouse.com



Mooala Organic® makes plant-based, vegan Bananamilk. This non-dairy beverage is made with a real banana base, sunflower seeds, and not much else. The drink is free of carrageenan, preservatives, sweeteners and top allergens.

mooala.com



Ready. Set. Food!™ baby foods provide safe and easy early allergen introduction to help prevent and overcome onset of food allergies through the process of frequently feeding common allergenic foods to your baby in a step by step process.

readyssetfood.com



HERO INGREDIENT MARKETING CLAIMS



Akua® makes **The Kelp Burger™** and they say the hero ingredient of kelp is the new plant-based ingredient of choice! The company offers kelp-based meat and seafood-alternative products using regenerative ocean farming.

akua.co



Eat the Change® presented their **Cosmic Carrot Chews™**—a chewy new kids snack sweetened only with fruit juice in a variety of flavors. This mission-based company gives back through ETC Impact™ expanding access to climate-friendly foods.

eatthechange.org



Brainiac®, a certified B Corp that focused on products for kids, packs the whole grain **Brain Bar®** with “brain fuel.” Functional ingredients include Omega-3s, Choline and Prebiotics—a suite of support nutrients they call the **Brain Pack®**.

Brainiacfoods.com



Freshbell uses pure Spanish pomegranate concentrate and easy-to-absorb ultralow-molecular weight fish collagen as hero ingredients in their Pomegranate Collagen jelly sticks. A very unique product we saw at the show!

freshbell-innerb.com



At NPEW, we discovered **Ernest Eats®** new oatmeals using mushrooms (yes, more mushrooms!) like Turkey Tail and Lion's Mane as adaptogens. These hero ingredients claim to help with aspects like restoration, immunity and focus.

www.earnesteats.com



Fava beans to make cheese!? **Big Mountain Foods** had a very distinctive product at the show in their Fava Feta cheese alternative. The product uses upcycled streams of fava beans to create a new plant-based, nut-free “cheese.”

bigmountainfoods.com

BEVERAGE MARKETING CLAIMS



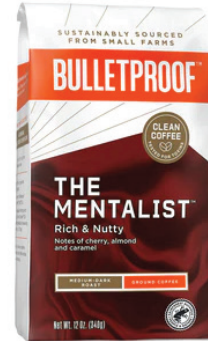
Melting Forest makes a mushroom sparkling water featuring beta-glucan found in adaptogens and nootropic mushrooms, a natural ingredient used in healing traditions for energy, mood and overall health. The waters come in “Chill,” “Energy,” and “Balance.”

meltingforest.com



Laird Superfood® introduced their instant latte (coffee, creamer and mushroom adaptogens all in one) with functional benefits and convenience. The product includes functional mushroom extracts from Chaga, Lion’s Mane, Maitake and Cordyceps.

Lairdsuperfood.com



Bulletproof™ makes **The High Achiever™**— an enhanced coffee with B Vitamins, Lion’s Mane and Coffeeberry® claiming to provide energy, focus and brain power.

bulletproof.com



The **Hydration Multiplier®** from **Liquid I.V.®** is a non-GMO electrolyte drink mix powered by Cellular Transport Technology (CTT)® to “hydrate faster and more efficiently than water alone.”

www.liquid-iv.com



Flow® is a 100% naturally alkaline water sourced from artesian springs with a smooth, clean taste that comes in eco-friendly packaging. The product line includes collagen-infused water, vitamin-infused water and zero sugar flavored waters.

flowhydration.com



Free AF™ drinks are non-alcoholic expressions of favorite cocktails enhanced with **Afterglow™**—a 100% natural botanical extract that mimics the pleasant warmth of alcohol, without the alcohol.

af-drinks.com

SUMMARY: NEW AND GROWING MARKETING CLAIMS

There's no doubt that NPEW gave us a lot to think about on the claims front. Our team saw some seriously cool innovations that took familiar concepts and gave them an awesome twist. There are a wide variety of natural products making bold claims centered around allergy-free foods, hero ingredients and cutting-edge beverage innovations. And of course, we can't forget about the mushrooms! That was an area where claims really evolved over 2022.

To make product stories and claims that really captivate consumers, it's crucial to dive deep into human behavior and preferences to ensure claims will resonate with all stakeholders and audiences. Keeping up on (or ahead of) the marketplace trends is also key.

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT:

The claims brands make must resonate with their target audiences... and the best way to make the RIGHT claims about your products? Ask your consumers what they truly think.

💡 **Moola Organic®** shares that they use research to keep a “constant pulse on the marketplace and... discover unfiltered feedback from real consumers.” The company also conducts proprietary studies to dive into product usage and opportunities for innovation—and this helps them hone not only what goes into their products, but also how to communicate claims like “allergy-free.”

💡 **Every Body Eat®** Cheese-Less™ thins' allergy-free development sprung out of a personal need for snack products with no allergens, and research remains a personal process with qualitative interviews helping to drive innovation and claim content.

💡 **Laird Superfood®** gathers feedback from their current consumers to make innovations to their products, and, in turn, the claims they share like adding functional adaptogens to their products and communicating these changes and additions the right way.





FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

In our survey of companies at Natural Products Expo West (NPEW) this year, we found that 60% of them are taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by adopting plant-based practices or positioning themselves as sustainable through their ingredient sourcing, manufacturing processes, use of eco-friendly packaging, or product offerings that support behavioral changes towards a sustainable future.

We also observed that several ingredient suppliers have established regenerative and sustainable divisions, which is the first step towards building agricultural infrastructure to support crop development. We also saw even more sustainability certifications, like those validating farming practices that lead to measurable improvements in the environmental footprint. **Let's take a look at innovations in sustainability...**

SUSTAINABILITY TRENDS AT NPEW



Airly® makes climate friendly snack products based on oats that are farmed on cutting-edge carbon-converting farms, and the company invests in carbon credits to offset transport and production.

airlyfoods.com



Made in Nature® upcycles fruit into their organic **Second Chances™** dried fruit morsels product, helping to reduce food waste by using superficially flawed fruit that would otherwise be discarded.

www.madeinnature.com



RIND® is another sustainable dried fruit product that reduces food waste by incorporating the edible peel in their snack product, as well as utilizing overripe fruit so it doesn't go to waste.

www.rindsnacks.com



Loop Mission is a circular economy company fighting food waste by repurposing the outcasts of the food industry—including day-old bread (for beer) and discarded potato cuttings (for gin). They've created "Loop Synergies" where they work closely with big food processors and produce distributors to repurpose their discards.

loopmission.com



All Real™ Nutrition's nutritional protein bars in fully compostable, completely plastic-free packaging made from bio-based paper and cellulose films. They also employ fully sustainable manufacturing processes (certified Origin Green), minimizing waste, water and electricity—and source local.

www.eatallreal.com



Big Green Organic Food is committed to using and providing non-GMO, natural and organic ingredients. The products are minimally processed, environmentally conscious and healthy with business activities that always consider environmental sustainability and fair trade.

biggreenorganic.com


SUMMARY: SUSTAINABILITY TRENDS

Not only were smaller and emerging companies focusing on sustainability at NPEW, we saw major multi-brand companies setting ambitious goals to make a measurable impact in the coming decades. Little, medium and big brands alike have been taking steps toward greater sustainability in many different areas—it's what consumers are saying they want, and we saw natural products companies responding.

And it's not just good brand practice to incorporate sustainability into business practices, it also meets rising consumer demands for sustainability both now and in the future. A concern in this space is greenwashing, and brands must do the legwork to ensure their sustainability messaging is spot on. Consumer insights can help establish and communicate relevance, uniqueness, believability, importance and brand fit of sustainability efforts.

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT:

We talk a lot about sustainability at InsightsNow, not only because we as an organization strive for a happier, healthier world—but also because consumers are looking for sustainability at both the company and product level more and more. There's no doubt that sustainability will continue to grow in importance for consumers.

 **Loop Mission** found whitespace in the sustainability space by focusing on food upcycling. Food waste is the third largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, and when they launched they found producers, manufacturers and distributors clamoring for their services—causing them to diversify their offerings based on demand. The company also shares with us that they work hard to keep their customers “involved in the story” by seeking feedback loops through different market research approaches, including social listening. The company has found that while upcycling is important to consumers, they also want a clean label product.





BRANDING TO DIFFERENTIATE

NPEW is a playground for branding innovation—featuring all sorts of exciting elements like cool fonts, catchy colors (think pink!), unique varnishes and sustainable pack designs with minimal waste. In the past, we saw many companies relying on product claims of natural benefits to drive brand recognition and growth. But this year's expo was all about building a bold and distinctive brand, many with a minimalist design and personalities targeting younger generations—and also many playing up their mission-based ethos.

This shift highlights the growing importance of packaging design in attracting consumers and building that all-important brand loyalty. With so many natural product companies competing for attention, it's more important than ever to stand out from the crowd.

Here we explore all the innovative packaging designs and mission-based messaging we discovered...

BRANDING INNOVATION AT NPEW



From **The Ground Up®** **You Need This** chips and puffs feature bold text and bright colors to “keep it real.” Their Cinnamon Churro Puffs were an example of one of the many pink packages we saw at this year’s show.

fromthegroundupsnacks.com



The products from **Melting Forest** have bold, colorful, pack designs that target younger audiences with benefits like energy and higher cognitive performance. The swirling eye-catching patterns incorporating fun mushroom cartoon drawings definitely stood out at the expo.

meltingforest.com



The **Sunwink™** brand personality shows through a more minimalist design on their packaging, with a target audience of women seeking relaxation moments. The beverage tonics and powders feature clean shapes and bright fresh colors.

Sunwink.com



Mission-based brands like **Battle Bars™** use targeting messaging to stand out. This energy bar company partners with Operation Enduring Warrior to honor, empower and motivate wounded military and law enforcement veterans through physical, mental and emotional rehabilitation.

Battlebars.com



Chobani® impressed us with their brand’s commitment to social justice, as they continue communicate about hiring refugees from diverse backgrounds to provide them with employment opportunities and support them in their search for a better life.

www.chobani.com/impact/diversity-and-inclusion/



Wilde Protein Chips® are wild! These snack chips are actually “crafted from real ingredients including chicken breast, egg whites and bone broth.” The chips claim to “get your macros up, and keep your calories controlled” while tasting great—a unique branding take to capture consumer interest.

www.wildebrands.com

SUMMARY: BRANDING TO DIFFERENTIATE

Creating a successful natural products brand that appeals to consumers is no easy feat. It requires a deep understanding of the market landscape and target audiences. NPEW showcased a vast array of branding strategies used by companies to establish themselves in the industry. But with so many options available, how can brands determine which approach will work best?

Armed with the right knowledge about consumer behavior knowledge, natural products companies can tailor branding efforts to create a unique and compelling message to reach customers on a deep and meaningful level. In this crowded space, creating a powerful brand is crucial to meet and exceed expectations—and create loyalty.

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT:

From mission-based messaging to unique packs, we saw it all at Natural Products Expo West. Differentiation took varied tactics...

💡 **Chobani®** continues to amp up their mission and capture the marketplace, and not just in the more common ways of pursuing sustainability and consumer wellness. They also fold in more unique missions like the employment of refugees mentioned in this section, but also doing original research to help promote healthier eating for children and having a foundation doing a variety of outreach efforts.

💡 **Sunwink™** knows their customer—and has designed their product with her in mind. Riding the wave of low- and no-alcohol alternatives and functional beverages, their clean and fresh labels with clear claims on health benefits stand out on the crowded beverage shelves!





BEYOND THE TRENDS

Product trends weren't all we discovered at Natural Products Expo West this year. We uncovered a treasure trove of information affecting the natural products industry that will help determine direction for many brands as they look to the future. We observed some significant shifts in themes between 2022 and 2023. There was a lot of buzz about the funding challenges that natural product companies face in today's economic climate. Plus, everyone was talking about consumer demand and affordability, and the world of plant-based product innovation continues to surprise and evolve. NPEW was, as usual, packed with incredible insights!

CHANGING LANDSCAPE SINCE 2022 EXPO WEST

Natural Products Expo West (NPEW) energizes us every year with an inspiring display of food and beverage innovation and ideas—providing the best snapshot of what’s happening now and what’s on the horizon. 2023 was no exception, with some notable differences compared to 2022. Namely, there was a focus on taste and flavor (discussed in-depth starting on page 5)—taste evolved to table stakes for success in 2023.

Each year sustainability efforts increase in importance to the natural products industry. While we saw sustainability as a notable post-pandemic trend in 2022, the number of products with sustainability claims was markedly higher in 2023. Further, greater marketing efforts were prevalent to substantiate sustainability claims and avoid the appearance of greenwashing. This included an expansion of certification marks on package in addition to the other claims such as allergy-free, clean label and more (go to page 16).

We can also dub 2023 the year of branding (see details on page 19). Natural products are using unique branding approaches now more than ever to stand out in crowded categories. This includes more mission brands that are sharing revenue or profitability to support a wide range of environmental and/or social causes.

How these year-over-year changes play out long-term depends on how the natural product industry responds to changes in consumer demand, e-commerce, climate, and social concerns, and the rebuilding of disrupted supply chains. Additionally, uncertainty around investment capital due to recent bank failures—an unfortunate development that commenced during the show—is likely to impact the industry (discussed below).

How all these factors play out in the future will be most interesting to watch.

FUNDING CHALLENGES FOR CONTINUED INNOVATION

With the current banking situation and uncertainty in the world of finance, we saw many founders and start-ups showing concern about what the future may hold. Just like in the tech industry, many natural food companies rely on venture capital funding—and this has allowed rapid growth in this sector. With financial industry uncertainty comes a reduction in the availability of venture funding. Rising interest rates have also proved challenging, especially with the previous decades of unusually low interest rates. Emerging brands and early stage growing brands will be especially affected by these developments. Having the right defined consumer benefits, understanding how your product fits into the landscape and changing the way new products enter the marketplace is going to be more important than ever. Stronger P&Ls will be required to meet venture capital requirements with less risky propositions.



CONSUMER DEMAND IS STRONGER THAN EVER

The good news is that the natural products industry is booming, and consumer demand is only getting stronger. In fact, according to Spins, this market grew by an impressive 6.6% in the U.S. last year. Our own consumer research shows that people are actively seeking natural products that offer health, wellness, functionality and sustainability, all while delivering the table stakes of great sensory experiences and affordability. And as the demand for natural products continues to grow, businesses that can deliver on these expectations stand to reap the rewards. With a focus on quality ingredients, exceptional sensory experiences and affordability, you can create a product that resonates with consumers and establishes your brand as a leader in this exciting and rapidly expanding industry.



“There is no doubt that the natural products landscape is constantly evolving. Staying up with what’s happening now and what’s coming in the future—especially in terms of the consumer mindset—will be key to brand and product success.” —Dr. Dave Lundahl, CEO & Founder, InsightsNow

PRODUCT AFFORDABILITY FOR CONSUMERS

Despite growing interest in natural foods and sustainability, many consumers are still hesitant to pay more for these products compared to more affordable mainstream counterparts. Our research indicates that even those who strongly value natural products and sustainability are often unwilling to trade up if it significantly impacts their wallets’ bottom line. To succeed, companies must prioritize affordability to attract investors and retailers—and, in turn, consumers. This means thoroughly researching the market and understanding consumer demand before bringing a product to market. Simply having a great product idea is not enough—it must be backed by a brand that stands out and earns consumer trust through clear messaging and delivering on promises of affordability. By prioritizing affordability and conducting thorough research, businesses can position themselves for success in the dynamic and ever-evolving natural products industry.



SIMPLIFYING THE PLANT-BASED PROCESSES

One way to help achieve affordability goals is to start at the beginning. From NPEW, we learned that many plant-based applications seems to require a lower technical threshold than in the past. And these new products with more accessible production and manufacturing processes are going to be able to go to market with more affordable price points in comparison to the past, and even in comparison to their animal-based products counterparts.

“Plant-based innovations will continue to grow with consumer demand for great tasting, nutrient dense product designs that are good for the planet. Clearly defining the consumer target and designing a product to meet their aspirations is the first step to market success. Ingredient innovations will continue to fuel product advances.” —Mark Crowell, CEO, CuliNEX



UNDERSTANDING—AND DESIGNING FOR—CONSUMER DEMAND

In recent times, larger plant-based companies such as Impossible Foods™ and Beyond Meat® have been facing a significant challenge—they have not been able to meet their investor-mandated targets. The question that arises here is: why is this happening?

According to *Bloomberg*, one of the main reasons is that many meat-eaters who were initially excited by the prospect of trying fake meat started taking a closer look at the ingredient list and were not convinced that they were trading up. While taste and texture may not have been deal-breakers for them, they found it challenging to understand what exactly was going into these plant-based alternatives. As a result, they were unable to justify the switch to these products.

This is where the importance of clear messaging comes into play. Consumers today are looking for products that are not just healthy and sustainable, but also ones that they can trust. They want to know exactly what they are consuming and what ingredients go into making the products they buy. Therefore, companies that communicate their message clearly and transparently are the ones that will succeed in the long run.



TIME TO START NATURALLY TRENDING

With this knowledge of the latest trends in the natural products arena, it's in your court to take action—a must for any brand looking to stay ahead of the curve and evaluate their focus in this rapidly evolving industry. The emergence of taste as a key driver of consumer choice, the continued diversification of plant-based products, new marketing claims, sustainability practices and exciting branding highlights are what we learned at the recent Natural Products Expo West.

If brands want to stand out in the highly competitive natural products industry, it's essential to look at human behavior on a deep and meaningful level—going beyond the basics and digging into the underlying motivations and needs. From satisfying sensory experiences to competitive price points to sustainability, it's vital to go the extra mile to exceed expectations and drive long-term loyalty. So, if you're looking to make a lasting impact in the natural products industry, be sure to prioritize customers and understand their unique needs.



CONGRATULATIONS!

on your commitment to creating a better world! Now, stay up-to-date with **SustalNnovation News™**, timely information each week to your inbox—tailored to your specific sustainability interests.

JOIN NOW

To Create a Sustainable Future!



At InsightsNow, we know it's hard to align product and brand strategy—
but it's essential to design experiences people love.

Our moments-based behavioral approach empowers visionary product leaders to activate insights and align product and brand strategy, building a healthier, happier world.

Special Thanks to Our Partner



Food Product Innovation and Development Solutions