

truvia™

# Sweetness From A Leaf

Meeting people's desire  
for a natural sweetener



# Introduction

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is a daily challenge for many people. Controlling calorie intake, alongside increased physical activity, is vital to successful weight management. Low calorie sweeteners can make a useful contribution to calorie control by offering a choice that helps people manage their intake of sugars as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Subject to European regulatory approval, expected in the coming months, UK consumers will be introduced to an entirely new category of sweetener derived from the stevia plant, which has long been used in many parts of the world for the natural sweetness of its leaves. This will offer people a totally new choice of calorie-free sweetener of natural plant origin.

Truvia® is the brand name of the first calorie-free sweetener, which originates from the best-tasting part of the stevia leaf. Developed by Cargill, Truvia® sweetener is now widely used in the USA since its introduction in 2008, and will be available, on EU approval, through an exclusive partnership between Cargill and The Silver Spoon Company for UK distribution and marketing.

As the UK market gears up for this new category of stevia-based sweeteners, it is timely to give nutrition professionals and food and health journalists advance insight into people's behaviour and attitudes towards current sweeteners, and their positive reaction to Truvia® calorie-free sweetener from the stevia leaf identified in independent research.

A short summary of clinical studies looking at the role of sweeteners in weight management and diabetes, is also included. Full details of the scientific research background to stevia and clinical studies are provided in an information booklet specifically for health and nutrition professionals.

# Consumer insights and market overview - a snapshot

Health and wellness is a growing trend, with people taking more responsibility for their health<sup>1</sup> and looking more to nature for solutions<sup>2</sup>. Against this background, independent research examined the profile and motivations of people who do and do not use sweeteners in order to better understand what prompts their choices.

## Profile and motivations of sweetener users

A consumer segmentation study<sup>3</sup>, commissioned by The Silver Spoon Company in 2010 showed that broader underlying motivations were key. It identified two main types of sweetener users:

1. The 'Proactively Healthy', used to describe those who are actively seeking to lead a healthy lifestyle generally.

Typical motivation of 'Proactively Healthy' consumers:

*"My main concern is trying to be healthy and I am constantly trying to lose weight so will pay extra for products that help me be more healthy. I try to limit my sugar intake as it's bad for my health and my teeth. I like to cook from scratch and use good quality ingredients - organic and fair-trade."*

- These people actively avoid sugar in a bid to lead a healthy lifestyle and choose to use artificial sweeteners and low calorie sugars (products containing a mixture of sugar and sweeteners) instead.
  - 'Proactively Healthy' consumers account for well over a third of the volume of sweetener sales in the UK<sup>3</sup>.
  - This group of people tends to be older - nearly half are aged 50-69yrs, with an average representation across socio-economic groups, and they are more likely to be female.
2. The 'Sweetener Treaters' are constantly seeking to lose or manage their weight and are so-called because sweeteners allow them to treat themselves without feeling guilty.

Typical motivation of 'Sweetener Treater' consumers:

*"I am constantly trying to lose weight, I try and look for low fat alternatives but am prone to comfort eating. Convenience and price are important. I always try and have sweeteners instead of sugar."*

- They find it difficult not to over-indulge and sweeteners offer a 'feel good' factor: they can enjoy sweet taste without calories and so feel worthy. Sweeteners appeal to this group, led by their appetite for sweetness, because they allow them to 'treat' themselves. They are motivated primarily by convenience and price.
- Overall, these people use less sugar than the 'Proactively Healthy' group and account for a similar volume (well over a third) of sweetener sales, although motivated by different reasons<sup>3</sup>.

- This group also has a slightly older bias; with an average social grade and gender split. They are also more likely to have health issues, including overweight and type 2 diabetes, than those who do not buy sweeteners; most come into the sweetener market through a desire to lose weight or to manage a health condition such as diabetes.

## Profile and motivations of non-users of sweeteners

It is equally important to understand what motivates non-users. People who do not use sweeteners can also be split into two broad groups based on their motivations, according to the recent consumer segmentation study<sup>3</sup>:

1. 'Foodies' use sugar not sweeteners because they like natural products and make a conscious decision not to buy anything artificial.

Typical motivation of 'Foodie' consumers:

*"I love cooking, especially for friends. Quality is worth paying more for. I look for British, organic and fair-trade products and avoid anything artificial. Sugar is one of the staples I have in stock but the quality you use makes a real difference to the final product."*

- They are really into their food and account for a large proportion of sugar volume, due to their love of baking. They do not like the taste of sweeteners and regard them as too artificial.

2. The 'Unengaged' are those who have little interest in sugar or sweeteners and are not particularly interested in knowing more.

Typical motivation of 'Unengaged' consumers:

*"I am not really interested in cooking or baking – I frequently have ready meals as they are quick and convenient. Taste is more important than health and sugar is just one of the basics. I don't really ever think about it."*

- They find they need to add sugar to improve the taste, but it is just something they have in stock. They frequently use ready meals as they are quick and convenient.

## Current UK market for sweeteners and primary usage patterns

The UK market for sweeteners is sizeable and people tend to use sweeteners on the same occasions as sugar. In particular:

- Sugar alternatives, which include low calorie products (made from a combination of sugar and sweeteners), and sweeteners, account for 18% of the total sugar and sweetener market in the UK, which is valued at £338.1 million<sup>4</sup>.
- A quarter (26%) of all UK households buy artificial sweeteners<sup>5</sup>.
- The majority of sweetener users use sweeteners largely for themselves, both at home and on the move.
- On the whole, sweeteners are used on the same occasions as sugar, primarily to sweeten tea and coffee, and also sprinkled on breakfast cereal and fruit, and for cooking and baking.
- According to the recent consumer segmentation study<sup>3</sup>, sweetening everyday tea and coffee is the most frequent use of sweeteners - well over a third of the time - followed by sprinkling on breakfast cereals, porridge, in desserts and over fruit. Sweeteners are used less for baking cakes and scones, approximately a quarter of the time.

## Attitudes to current sweetener offerings

When asked to describe their views on sweeteners<sup>3,6</sup>, people in general were not completely satisfied with the products currently on offer, whether or not they already used sweeteners. The main reasons they gave in prompted discussion were that the products are artificial; they do not taste as good as sugar; they have an aftertaste; and they lack the sensory properties of sugar.

In particular, people in the 'Proactively Healthy' group expressed the following views:

- They see sweeteners as a healthier alternative to sugar
- They would like to have a natural alternative to the current sweeteners available: approximately three quarters wish that they could have something natural that doesn't have the calories of sugar, and they try to avoid artificial ingredients<sup>3</sup>
- More than half wish they could have a sweetener that tastes like sugar without the calories<sup>3</sup> i.e. currently they sacrifice taste and texture. They want something with no aftertaste that tastes more like sugar
- For some, above all, 'no calories' is a must; this is not something they are prepared to compromise
- For others, there is a trade-off and balancing act in play. If they have sweeteners all day in hot drinks for example, they can then allow themselves a treat such as wine or cake in the evening
- Others still are not prepared to compromise on taste and/or texture of sugar. They do want a healthier product option and natural is key, but it has to deliver the sugar sensory experience i.e. the mouth feel of granulated sugar.

This picture suggests that current sweeteners on the market fail to meet all of the needs of these 'Proactively Healthy' consumers. Although they predominantly choose and use sweeteners, they are compromising their principles by having to use an artificial product in a bid to be healthy, as there is currently no 'natural' alternative offering.

## Reactions to experiencing Truvia® stevia-based sweetener

In the most recent of qualitative consumer research studies<sup>6</sup>, carried out on behalf of the Truvia® Business and The Silver Spoon Company, five focus groups of 40 'proactively healthy' women were held in South-East England and the North in April 2011. Their reactions to experiencing Truvia® sweetener were extremely positive.

In a nutshell, on first exposure to Truvia® sweetener, these women believed they could have their cake and eat it<sup>6</sup>! They found Truvia® sweetener to be a surprisingly enjoyable tasting alternative to sugar, that tasted like sugar. A common reaction was that not only was it good on foods like strawberries, but it also positively contributed to enjoyment of hot drinks.

In another study looking at consumers' response to the Truvia® concept, appeal was significantly enhanced by the natural origin and calorie-free attributes<sup>7</sup>.

The following quotes illustrate typical reactions to the Truvia® concept<sup>7</sup>:

*"I am diabetic but have a sweet tooth and find it difficult to find food sweet enough to fulfil my needs without sugar and calories."*

*"Natural product that hopefully imparts the same flavour and texture to hot drinks that sugar does."*

*"I am concerned about the side effects ...of artificial sweeteners so a natural alternative would be most welcome."*

Those who tried Truvia® sweetener for the first time showed great surprise at how good it was<sup>6</sup>. Their language changed from sweetener to sugar vocabulary and they felt Truvia® sweetener had the potential to become "the family alternative to sugar".

Typical first impressions were expressed as<sup>6</sup>:

*"It looks like real sugar doesn't it?"*

*"I like the texture of that."*

*"I want some more! Really lovely. It has that crunch like sugar."*

*"It's a nice flavour isn't it?"*

*"It doesn't have an after taste at all...I'm pleasantly surprised."*

*"It's an exciting new product with a fantastic taste."*

*"I'd buy it because it's natural."*

*"Because natural would be healthy and I'd be more willing to use it in cooking and everything else if it's 100% natural. And I would use it for the grandchildren and everybody else in the family."*

*"It could be a new, healthier way of living couldn't it?"*

# Potential benefits from calorie-free sweeteners - an overview

Overweight and obesity continue to rise and cause significant health problems for many adults and children across Europe<sup>8</sup>. Improvements in dietary and physical activity habits across the population are widely promoted solutions to the problem of rising rates of obesity and related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes. Low calorie sweeteners can play a useful role as part of a healthy, balanced diet by helping patients control their calorie intake.

## Sweeteners and weight management

Low calorie, or calorie-free sweeteners, such as Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener from the stevia leaf, can help people control their calorie intake, and improve compliance with dietary goals, as a key ingredient in good-tasting, reduced-calorie foods that people will accept.

- Research has shown that overweight people who continue to consume some sweet foods are more likely to stick to their diets, and the use of low calorie sweeteners is particularly useful during the maintenance phase after weight loss, and to help prevent weight regain after successful weight loss<sup>9,10</sup>.
- Clinical studies have also shown that the consumption of intense sweeteners does not stimulate the appetite, nor result in increased food intake<sup>11,12</sup>. In addition, it does not lead to an increased desire for sweet foods<sup>13</sup>.

## Sweeteners and type 2 diabetes

People with type 2 diabetes may find low calorie sweeteners useful to help manage the calories and carbohydrates in their diet, since low calorie sweeteners do not affect blood glucose levels<sup>14</sup>. People with diabetes can safely consume products containing Truvia<sup>®</sup> tabletop sweetener and Truvia<sup>®</sup> rebiana (the best tasting part of the stevia leaf and an ingredient used to sweeten food and beverages). Both are non-glycemic and non-calorific.

- As well as providing no calories, clinical studies have shown that chronic daily consumption of Truvia<sup>®</sup> rebiana in doses consistent with, and exceeding, the acceptable daily intake does not affect blood sugar control and is well-tolerated by people with type 2 diabetes. Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener also has no effect on the glycemic index<sup>15,16</sup>.

# Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener – a proven track record

Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener is widely used in the USA since its introduction in 2008. More recently, it was introduced in France and it is already proving an attractive choice for consumers.

## A USA success story

After only two years on the US market, the Truvia<sup>®</sup> brand has become the number one stevia-based sweetener<sup>17</sup>.

- To date, over 5,000,000 households have bought Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener<sup>18</sup>.
- It is also the second best-selling product in the sugar substitute category overall<sup>17</sup>.
- Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener has been welcomed by US healthcare professionals as a new tool to help patients achieve dietary change. It complements the current approaches to weight management based on behavioural change theory, which include encouraging greater consumption of nutrient-rich foods rather than turning the spotlight on foods to avoid; using tools like scales, pedometers, food and exercise diaries and rewards to help patients track their progress; focusing on small, gradual changes which are achievable; and reinforcing small victories.
- Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener tackles the heart of the issue of dietary change: food acceptance. Because it tastes good and it is convenient, patients use it, ensuring compliance - the biggest daily challenge for healthcare professionals.

## The French reaction

Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener was launched in France in March this year, following the French national approval for the use of rebaudioside A in food and beverages in September 2009 for a temporary period of two years. Rebaudioside A is the best-tasting steviol glycoside found in the stevia leaf and the main sweetness component in Truvia<sup>®</sup> sweetener.

- To date the reception has been positive. In just 14 months, stevia-based tabletop sweeteners account for 11% of the sugar substitute category.



# Conclusion

Taken together, findings from independent market and consumer research in the UK identify a strong consumer desire for a natural sweetener with no calories. The introduction of stevia-based sweeteners, in the form of Truvia® sweetener from the best-tasting part of the stevia leaf, will provide a new option that addresses 'Proactively Healthy' people's requirements - a great tasting sweetener with the natural and valued characteristics of sugar, without the calories.

Currently these people have to compromise by using an artificial solution to address their health concerns. Truvia® sweetener provides another option which is seen to be a natural, tasty and enjoyable calorie-free sugar substitute. In addition, those people who do not currently make sweetness decisions based on health, might be prompted to reconsider, once they become aware of this new stevia-based category of sweetener.

In the context of the growing awareness of the serious health risks related to obesity, sensible eating and improved fitness are increasingly important to many people. Truvia® sweetener provides sweetness with no calories and therefore can play a useful role in a healthy balanced diet.

Commenting from the perspective of experience in the United States, Professor Robert Murray of the Department of Human Nutrition, Ohio State University, says:

*"Physicians and dieticians who work with families to improve nutrition and help establish a healthy weight need new tools. Diet behaviour is complex. We are trying to achieve three goals: to cut added sugars and solid fats, to cut total calories and to promote the consumption of more nutrient-rich foods. Truvia® sweetener offers us a powerful tool to address all three in a family's diet because it goes to the heart of dietary choice, the taste of food. I'm excited to introduce it to people seeking to improve their nutrition."*

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