

Perspective: Ingredient Technology

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Our competition

Competition is not only the basis of protection to the consumer, but is the incentive to progress — Herbert Hoover

Let me reclaim my perch for a moment and reiterate an idea that I've been harping on for a long time — the key competitive-edge dairy products have going for them is their intrinsic health-promoting properties. This is not news. After all, milk was designed by nature to deliver nutrition and health exclusively — no other product can make that claim. The concept of using health claims to market products is not lost on our competition, and they are becoming masters at it.

Soy visualizes its product lines of tomorrow not in the trenches of protein replacement but in components with

greatest focus on achieving data to support the health claims or formulation abilities and then implementing them. Unfortunately, our industry hasn't been as focused as our competition and we are falling behind. As a more tightly knit industry, soy was able to capitalize on early health claims. Dairy has existing claims that are not routinely used. Other claims remain elusive due to a lack of domestic and international attention.

Looking ahead, claims for dairy products will most likely take two routes — the slow, methodical path based on multilateral cooperation, and the quick, proprietary path leading to claims by branded products. The latter won't be health claims per se, but will focus on messages of interest to consumers. There will be divergence in our industry. Up to now, milk is milk and what is true for milk in one country applies to all countries. Tomorrow, however, private companies will scientifically substantiate marketable claims based on specific components of milk. Genetic engineering will yield cows that produce great quantities of those value-added components. When that day comes, competition within the global dairy industry will explode. Such an advantage won't be limited to competing products in the dairy marketplace — the same advantage will be held over soy and other products.

Chemically hydrogenated fats such as margarine and shortening got their start when manufacturers gained the

vegetable oil into the exact product the customer needed. Subsequently, butter sales plunged while lard and tallow just about died altogether. This same thought pattern is in play today. Instead of hydrogenation, the technology is genetic engineering. Instead of melting points and no cholesterol as the messages, we are looking at reduction of cancer or cardiovascular risk.

As Mr. Hoover so eloquently put forth, competition is a healthy thing that, in the end, benefits the consumer. Taking this a step further, I think it can safely be said that we are all interested in and striving to improve the nutritional status of not only our own citizens but those of the world. The more we discover about our products, the easier it will be. The associations that support basic research recognize this and their role is critical to the development of the scientific foundation for the above to happen, no matter what the commodity. Our own American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) promotes the concept of "improving the nutritional status of the global population." ADSA represents the academic, industry and government scientists who work in either milk production or dairy manufacturing. Working collectively with the support of the dairy industry, ADSA sees that noble goal as achievable. What do you think? **CMN**

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