



Global demand for healthy confectionery and mini meal replacements will be centre stage at Yummex Middle East

MENA confectionery sales to reach USD11 billion in value by 2021, says Euromonitor International, global snack industry to top USD590 billion by 2023.

Middle East consumers, long renowned for their sweet tastes, are increasingly seeking out more health-conscious confectionery products, according to Euromonitor International, the global market intelligence publisher.

It is a topic that will be explored, alongside a growing trend that is witnessing a shift towards snacks as a meal

replacement, at yummex Middle East 2018, the region's dedicated event for sweets and snacks professionals, which is organised by Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) in partnership with Koelnmesse GmbH and runs from 30 October to 1 November.

Euromonitor International, the show's knowledge partner, predicts that while

demand for sugar-based confectionery in the Middle East and Africa (MENA) will continue to grow over the next five years, consumer choices will shift towards healthier products. The report adds that the healthy snack craze is particularly taking hold in the UAE market, driving a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4 per cent compared with 1 per cent CAGR for the wider MENA region.

Indulgence is key, habits are changing

"Indulgence is and will always be a core driver in foods. However, it is changing shape and form, as consumers are more concerned about what they put into their bodies. Consumer demand is evolving, particularly towards healthier options," states the report. "With a wealth of healthy confectionery products being introduced into the market, consumers are spoiled for choice. The trend for healthy snacking has translated into a craving for healthier treats to satisfy the sweet tooth. Claims such as gluten free, vegan, no-added sugar and the use of natural ingredients will continue to influence consumer decisions. They are happy to splash out on premium sugar confectionery products if it translates into quality, taste and better health," the report adds.

The healthy-snacking trend is in evidence among the expansive regional and international exhibitor line-up for

yummex Middle East, with manufacturers racing to launch wellbeing products into the MENA market where Euromonitor International predicts confectionery sales will reach USD11 billion in value by 2021.

The UAE's BMB Group will be rolling out its new Freakin' Healthy superfood bars and raw chocolate range. Roy E. Koyess, brand partner, says healthier snacking options are changing the industry's momentum.

"We've created Freakin' Healthy to break through today's boring, elitist health snack category. We believe more and more consumers are moving towards healthier lifestyles and are looking for choices that meet their snacking habits. Freakin' Healthy promises no junk in the products and deliver snacks with benefits," he said.

Demand, added Koyess, can translate into products free from wheat, dairy, added sugar, gluten, GMO, preservatives, artificial colours and flavours, even soy.

A new era in snacking

"The health movement has reached the Middle East," said Koyess. "However, it comes with an elitist badge that alienates the majority. We are targeting the many who have the intention to choose healthier options yet are intimidated by the choices because they don't understand them. There is a need for a brand that doesn't get categorised as "hipster food", that invites even the hardest of cynics because it uses simple language.

The 'snacks with health benefits' movement has also been taken up by Italian confectionery heavyweight Majani, Italy's oldest chocolate manufacturer and creator of the legendary cremino snack first created in 1911 to celebrate the launch of the Fiat Tipo 4. At yummex Middle East, Majani will roll out their gluten-free, no-milk-recipe Italian confectionery icon, some varieties of which now have no added sugar.

