

Rising consumer awareness

— a propeller of the dairy industry

The dairy industry is diverse with several milk-based products, and with so many available options to choose from, consumers now demand a higher degree of safety and nutrition from their food. Not only that, consumers in all sectors depict an increasing level of awareness and seek more information regarding the food they purchase.

Alongside, people are now opting for healthier options and cautiously monitoring what they consume. Such can be seen by the rising trend of purchasing properly packaged meat, swapping rice for quinoa, choosing fresh over frozen and avoiding junk food.

It comes as no surprise that the country's economic development and higher affordability coupled with the prevalence of various diseases and fear of food adulteration brought forth this phenomenon. In order to gain further insights on this topic, we discussed the altering and current trends in consumer demand for higher safety and nutrition from food with three industry leaders.

Md Muniruzzaman

Executive Director, PRAN Dairy Limited

"Without a speck of doubt, the demand for healthier food categories is on the rise. Addressing this trend, we introduced a line of 100 percent pure fruit juices under the brand name 'Latina'," said Muniruzzaman. "Furthermore, in order to ensure superior quality and packaging that retains the flavour and nutrition of food, we opt for aseptic packaging," he added.

Aseptic packaging is a form of packaging that stores food in a sterile and tamper-evident carton, preventing any chances of

adulteration and protecting food from any external influences like air, water, sunlight, bacteria, etc. Tetra Pak's six-layer aseptic packaging ticks all the boxes and is the first choice for industry leaders.

"It eliminates the usage of preservatives, there exists no scope of food contamination and it is a viable option to guarantee longer shelf life, making it the first choice for great packaging," he said.

He also noted that maintaining transparency with customers has to be a synergistic process, where it is the manufacturer's responsibility to communicate appropriate information and the consumer's responsibility to understand the importance of proper packaging.

Mohammad Anisur Rahman

Senior Director, BRAC Enterprises

Being the pioneer when it comes to rewarding customers with new ranges of dairy products, Aarong Dairy opts for nothing but the best for its consumers.

"The rise in consumer awareness and demand is always a positive factor, as this compels processors to meet their growing needs and enrich the market by introducing new products," remarked Rahman.

A relatively newer form of milk is categorised by UHT milk, where the main differing factors from pasteurised milk lies in the treatment and packaging methods. UHT milk is heat treated at a very high temperature and packed into sterile containers to eliminate all harmful materials and elongate its shelf life.

With this notion, the company ensures safe and secure food by using Tetra Pak's six-layer aseptic packaging.

"The aseptic packaging that is currently

used for UHT milk not only warrants safe consumption of food, but considerably reduces the detrimental impact on the environment as well, as it is paper-based and recyclable provided we have the required technology and facility," he informed.

However, he also agrees that it is equally the responsibility of consumers as it is of producers to safeguard food safety and prevent health hazards. By checking the ingredients, nutritional value, dates of manufacture and expiry, along with seals from authorised food regulatory bodies such as BSTI and BFSA, consumers can ensure this.

Syed Alamgir

MD and CEO, Akij Venture Group

"Given the economic condition of our country, pricing plays a vital role in

influencing the consumption pattern of people. However, this comes as a challenge as it is almost inevitable to ensure premium quality without compromising price," recognised Alamgir.

UHT milk combined with aseptic packaging, although pricier, is unmatched in terms of superior quality. Thus, it is the duty of consumers in this case to understand the benefits that come along with the slight increase in price, and make their purchase decisions accordingly.

"The packaging material used must preserve the taste and quality of food, ensure maximum shelf life, prevent leakage and decay of food over time, and mitigate the risk of contamination by air-borne bacteria," he said.

He also agrees that it is the consumers' right to know what they are paying for, which is why in Akij Food and Beverage Limited, the information printed on food packaging is very comprehensive, not only covering data that is legally mandated but extending to include additional information as well.

Over time, the rise in consumer demand for higher safety and nutrition content from food is foreseeable, whether it is the growing demand for healthy food categories, packaged food, or greater awareness about ingredients and labels. Thus, consumers must make informed decisions regarding their purchases, keeping in mind that the quality of packaging and treatment of food plays an essential role in the safety attributes as well.

By Fariha Amber

Photo: Collected

