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СФЕРАХ УКРАЇНИ: ТЕОРІЯ І ПРАКТИКА»**

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TRENDS IN HEALTHY FOOD: EU EXPERIENCE FOR MARKETERS¹

According to WHO, 58% of the population in Eastern Europe is overweight. 50% of Eastern Europeans agree with this, which indicates a high level of consumer awareness. In comparison, in Asian countries, only 29% of the population is overweight, 46% agree with this, and 54% are trying to lose weight. 58% of Ukrainians face the problem of being overweight. Since 1990, this “unhealthy” indicator has increased by 6% [1].

The Ukrainian market during the war is balancing between global and domestic trends. The megatrend that is gaining in the food market is healthy eating. People are increasingly concerned about their health, and therefore, the usefulness or at least harmlessness of food is important to them.

Healthy eating has become a part of the life of a modern consumer, who is ready to change their diet and eating habits due to the understanding of how excess weight affects health.

At the same time, advertising of healthy food products in Ukraine is less than 1% of the total advertising expenditure, while advertising of fast food accounts for up to 40%, and

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products with a high content of salt, sugar, and fat, including sweet carbonated drinks, is 51% [2].

The following modern trends in healthy eating can be distinguished [1, 3–11]:

- *plant-based diet*. A plant-based diet is based on plant-based foods. It can include fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, grains, and legumes. This trend encompasses increased consumption of plant-based foods by all population groups, not necessarily excluding animal products, but emphasizing a plant-based diet. This trend is growing due to the environmental, health, and ethical benefits associated with reducing animal-based consumption;

- *functional food*. The essence of the trend is that consumers are increasingly looking for foods that are not only filling but also provide additional health benefits. These foods are enriched with specific ingredients that can improve certain aspects of health, such as supporting immunity, cognitive function, or supporting digestion. Functional food is gaining popularity due to its potential health benefits, such as improving immunity, digestive health, and reducing stress. The war also has a significant impact on the consumption of functional foods, as many people are stressed and have pre-depressive states. Functional products have a calming and anticonvulsant effect, but there is low awareness of them in the market and a lack of legislative regulation;

- *sustainable packaging and local production*. Sustainable packaging helps reduce carbon emissions and the amount of waste that ends up in landfills and oceans. The use of recycled materials and biodegradable options can significantly reduce the environmental impact of product packaging. Consumers are increasingly demanding environmentally friendly solutions and supporting local producers, which reduces their carbon footprint and promotes sustainable development;

- *innovative technologies in the food industry*. Advanced technologies are being introduced in the food industry (lab-grown meat, 3D food printing, artificial intelligence and smart packaging). This applies to both goods production and their processing, packaging and distribution. Innovations are aimed at increasing efficiency, reducing costs and minimizing environmental impact.

They allow for a more sustainable, healthy, and personalized approach to nutrition;

- *personalized nutrition*. Personalized nutrition is an approach that takes into account individual characteristics, such as genetics, metabolism, allergies, and consumer preferences, to create an optimized nutritional plan. It is implemented through collaboration with nutritionists, the use of specialized applications or services that conduct genetic tests and analyze your eating habits. This approach aims to optimize health and well-being based on personal data;

- *convenient and healthy food on supermarket shelves* (various sandwiches, burgers, pita breads, to which herbs, seeds, spices are added, that increase nutritional value; rolls, snacks, spreads (hummus, cheese, pâtés, etc.) and salads, dressings and disposable utensils are packed in separate sachets, containers; soft drinks - fermented, vegetable and fruit smoothies and fresh juices, functional drinks, which are additionally enriched with ingredients and superfoods). The segment of products for healthy eating represents a small share, but it is constantly growing. The buyer wants an increasingly wide range and clear identification of such products;

- *eco-orientation and social responsibility of business*. The trend for ecological consumption and healthy eating from year to year forces manufacturers to communicate with consumers about the manufacturer's measures to preserve the environment, social responsibility. This is implemented through a message on the packaging about zero CO2 emissions or measures that contribute to its reduction; illustrations of the production chain on packages; indications of the absence of child labor or support for local farmers, “clean” labels – products without E. 60% of European consumers find a product with a “low carbon footprint” attractive;

- *time for ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat*. The consequence of power outages is that many respondents now prefer long-term storage products (59%) and cold food (50%). Also, during frequent air alarms, people tend to eat snacks and drink hot beverages more. Power outages have also highlighted the need for portioned food. At

the same time, the greatest demand for ready-made meals is in large cities, where there are more electrified high-rise buildings;

– *arranging family dinners*. Family dinners have become popular during the coronavirus pandemic, and this trend is continuing in Ukraine today. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has made food more expensive, so instead of eating out and eating out, people are switching to cooking at home. Local produce and recipes made with local, rather than imported, fruits and vegetables have also become a big trend. In addition, studies show that returning to home cooking with loved ones helps develop a healthy relationship with food and spend quality time together;

– *more legumes*. Beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas, and other legumes improve health in a variety of ways. Just half a cup of legumes a day improves gut health, stabilizes blood sugar levels, and lowers blood pressure. Legumes can be eaten plain with a meatball, or added to soups and casseroles for a rich, creamy texture;

– *including intuitive eating*. According to scientists, during the peak of the pandemic from 2019 to 2022, there was a real surge in cases of eating disorders. Therefore, intuitive eating and a complete rejection of diets became a trend among those who want to be healthy and feel that the diet culture is destroying their lives. In 2024, more and more people are abandoning diets. Intuitive eating, seeking help and a positive attitude towards food are the answers to diets;

– *creating cultural diversity in nutrition*. Sometimes food just becomes the same. Therefore, it is very important to try products and different spices from other cultures from time to time. You can also learn new recipes. Spicy dishes are becoming popular. Chili and its varieties, spicy smoking, hot sauces, varieties of vinegar, sausages, soups, cocoa with chili - this is a new whirlwind of spiciness in the kitchen. Coffee with mushrooms is also becoming popular. This trend has been going on for over 3 years and does not lose its relevance;

– *zero-waste cooking*. A lot of food is thrown away, not eaten. People store food for a long time, do not optimize it. But in current trends - reducing food waste, and also - recycling seeds, peels, bones, plastic for a new biological cycle. Processed foods, for

example, fruit peels, vegetable pulp - in general, everything that is usually thrown away when cooking - they can also offer you a lot of nutrients, so you should not throw them away, it is better to find recipes for cleaning, and throw away less garbage;

- *label reading*. In 2024, consumers continue to be interested in what is written on product labels. Healthy products - low in fat, without added sugar and salt, etc. - are useful products that allow you to focus on proper nutrition;

- *ownhousehold*. Growing your own food and keeping pets is a trend that began to develop during the pandemic, and continued during the full-scale invasion. Home gardening and homesteading is another trend that will remain in 2024;

- *water*. The focus shifts to adequate aquaculture, certification, non-governmental organizations that regulate, support, and monitor water farms, filtration, and coastal ecosystems in general;

- *good fats*. Avocados and almond milk are giving way to seeds: hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, flax, sunflower, and tahini are entering the food arena. This gives new flavors, a good nutritional composition, more plant protein, and phytonutrients. And ensuring healthy fats in the diet - as before, and long-lasting saturation, and slow release of sugars into the blood, and the correct functioning of fat-soluble vitamins;

- *adaptogens and foods that affect hormones and neurotransmitters*. Adaptogens are medicines and biologically active supplements that facilitate the body's adaptation to various adverse effects: cold, heat, lack of oxygen, ionizing radiation, industrial pollution and increase physical and mental performance, stress resistance. We are talking about higher mushrooms and not only in dietary supplements, for example, coffee with adaptogens, high-quality green teas with good doses of GABA and theanine. Also, much attention is paid to food that supports female hormones;

- *reducing alcohol consumption*. This is a global trend of recent times. Consumers are not giving up alcohol completely, but the pandemic, a full-scale invasion with a partial ban on the purchase of alcohol, and conscious nutrition contribute to its spread. According to the London-based research organization IWSR, in

addition to the renewed desire for “healthier” habits, the demand for low-alcohol drinks (31%) is growing, including low-alcohol dry ciders and wines with 10-11% alcohol (instead of 13-14%);

- removal of processed and refined foods from restaurant menus;
- focus on local food and seasonal products;
- products from small farms;
- review of portions: from quantity to nutritional value;
- noticeable highlighting of vegetarian and vegan items, etc.

Through packaging, sellers tell buyers about the benefits and origin of the product: where it was grown, how and by whom it was produced. Such communication becomes an integral part of the culture of buying and selling.

At the same time, manufacturers of “harmful” products are also forced to respond to these trends. Four main paths can be distinguished that such manufacturers have taken, satisfying the needs of the buyer [5]:

- change the volume of packaging and composition. By reducing the portion, they seem to indicate that this product should be consumed carefully and from time to time, as a one-time treat;

- change the recipes and content of the product - reduce the amount of sugar, salt and fats;

- expand the assortment - reduce products with a sugar content and introduce healthy products into their portfolio;

- change the company’s strategies with a focus on food products as a preventive measure against disease.

Thus, these trends directly affect sales of product categories, both in the Ukrainian market and in the markets of Eastern Europe. This results in the share of sales of healthy categories (water, fruits, tea, vegetables, yogurts and dairy products) in Eastern Europe growing faster than the share of sales of unhealthy categories (sweet carbonated drinks, chips, chocolate, cookies): with an increase of 15% for healthy and 11% for unhealthy [5].

Although healthy food goods currently occupies a small share of the Ukrainian FMCG market, this segment shows high growth rates and allows us to expect further growth in the next years. Based on date, in terms of organic exports of fruits, fresh or dried, except citrus and tropical fruits, by exporting countries, in 2022 Ukraine ranked 2nd after Turkey [9]. At the same time, the German market, whose citizens are supporters of healthy eating, is the main and promising market for Ukrainian producers. So, it opens up new opportunities for product marketers of all sizes enterprises: from small startups to large businesses.

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