

Exclusive: Free From Expo Brings New Functional Section



The fifth edition of Free From/Functional Food Expo brings together European professionals from these food sectors, to meet global trends for products free of certain ingredients. In 2017, Free From/Functional Food Expo takes place in Barcelona (Spain), in June 8-9. The organizers consider the trade fair essential for the food professionals from retail, food service and catering. We talked with Ronald Holman, exhibition director, to find out more about what this trade fair means for bakers and confectioners in the area of free-from products. One of the news for this year's edition is extending the trade fair's concept to include functional foods and ingredients.

By Ioana Oancea

WorldBakers (WB): How do you characterize the show's evolution over its five editions?

Ronald Holman (RH): "Growth, growth and growth! [We have recorded] growth in the number of exhibitors and visitors – with more exhibitors in the functional snacks category. This year's show is 20% bigger than in 2016 and we now host more than 270 exhibitors from 25 countries. Product marketing has also changed, and is now more focused on what the product the product does not contain.

Food at the exhibition is both gluten free and lactose free; vegan and dairy free; sugar free and GMO free. That is why we have extended the trade fair's concept into functional food and ingredients. Furthermore, it attracts food manufacturers looking for what is new on the market."

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FREE FROM FOOD EXPO FUNCTIONAL FOOD EXPO
8-9 JUNE 2017
BARCELONA

WB: What can baking professionals expect from the program this year, which are some of the highlights?

RH: "This fifth Jubilee edition offers a lot more than previous editions in terms of a more diverse landscape of exhibitors. There are more innovative (morning goods) products, better quality products, and tastier goods due to growth of free-from product innovation investments in previous years – and, as a result, more suppliers at the trade fair."

WB: What will be some of the main topics/speakers of the conference?

RH: "Our Conference Committee is currently inviting a selection of the best speakers and experts from Mintel, Euromonitor, the Spanish Retail Association, retail buyers and free from/functional ingredient manufacturers. Topics will include market insights on gluten free, lactose free, sugar free vegan, protein, and reduced dairy."

WB: What are some of the main trends you can anticipate for the free-from bakery industry, on the long term?

RH: "Retailers are stocking more and more gluten-free cereals to respond to the increase in demand, while breakfast remains one of the most important meals of the day. Breakfast is a big opportunity for free-from food businesses, with 55% of shoppers eating breakfast at home. In addition, consumers are looking to fuel their day with something healthy, quick and easy to prepare. Convenience is one of the market's driving trends."



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WB: What is the profile of the bakery/ confectionery professional visitor?

RH: "We invite retail and food service buyers, and like previous editions we are again welcoming the bakery/confectionery category buyers. More and more supermarkets have specific free-from category buyers, and these buyers are very important for us. We are also attracting product managers and marketing managers."

WB: Please comment on the forming of a new [Gluten-Free Industry Association \(GFIA\)](#), which supports companies involved in the manufacture and trade of gluten-free products in Europe.

RH: "We are members and we do support the GFIA, as their goal is to assist food manufacturers to implement an allergy-free management processing system in food processing. It is important to promote and safeguard food safety."

WB: How will the free-from bakery market in Europe be affected by Brexit?

RH: "It is still quite uncertain how the trade deals between the UK Government and the EU will affect the trade business of food import and export. If trade taxes and protection of EU products will appear as a result of a lack of good and equal trade deals, prices will increase for imports and the competition for UK products will be stronger. We are hopeful that UK-EU markets will find a new balance."

Conference program

Access to all conference sessions is free of charge for visitors to the trade fair. The program offers insights, market analyses, experiences, free-from food ingredient technology and industry views from top speakers from retail, food service, catering, celiac societies, science, suppliers and trade.

Free From/Functional Food Expo prepared two main conferences this year: The [Free From](#) and Lactose [Free Conference](#). The list of speakers and programs can be found on the event's website.