

News Release

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Author: Joy Powell, jpowell@startribune.com

Contact: David Feider, (952) 742-6910, david_feider@cargill.com

Re-engineering food for life's ages, stages

If you're one of 30 million "tweens" ages 8 to 12 in this country, your idea of a fun and tasty dinner is far different than if you're one of the 78 million boomers, who place a premium on nutrition and convenience.

These differences in what consumers want at varying stages of life have inspired Minnetonka-based Cargill Inc. to launch a new marketing model that combines psychology, taste, nutrition and more.

On Sunday, the country's biggest private company is unveiling in New Orleans a strategy that revolves around 12 life stages, from birth to the "winding down" days of the elderly. It's a striking shift away from the traditional demographics-based marketing approach based on age and income.

"As we did our primary consumer research, we discovered that people were not defining themselves based on their age," said Paul Hillen, vice president of Cargill's Food System Design unit. "They were defining themselves based on their life stage, based on what they were doing in their lives at that moment and where they saw themselves going."

It makes sense to look at life stages, Cargill executives say, in an age when kids are growing up faster, when couples in their 40s are starting families, when Americans are living longer and becoming wiser about how they fuel their bodies.

"We talk about 50 being the new 30. People are saying, 'As long as I act and behave young and take care of my body as if it was 30, I'm going to have a far more productive life,'" Hillen said.

Cargill aims to provide food ingredients that metabolically give consumers what they need to stay fit and live longer. Beyond that, consumers want to feel good about using the products and being seen with them, Hillen said.

Meal-replacement drinks, for example, have been associated with declining health, Hillen said. So Cargill targets people in that life stage with products that can help them feel fit and have the image of being 30, he said.

That means, in Cargill's plan, using its hundreds of plant and animal ingredients for specific products. Take, for example, pretzels for boomers, who demand more from their food beyond taste and texture. Cargill can fortify such snacks with its soy protein called Prolisse and Inulin fiber from chicory roots, to deliver 10 percent more of the daily value of protein and fiber than regular pretzels, the company says.

Chips and dips with less fat

Cargill has been eyeing a dynamic shift in the American household, where tweens are growing up far faster than they did 20 years ago and exerting greater influence over what food is bought and served in their homes, Hillen said.

Kids today mature faster emotionally and physically and are expected to take on far more responsibilities in U.S. households, where divorce rates and dual incomes have exceeded 50 percent rates.

Avoiding fights

Twenty or 30 years ago, mothers were making most of the food decisions, but many of today's parents are avoiding fighting over what kids should eat because there are greater concerns, such as where the kids are and what they're doing. Cargill, which makes ingredients for food companies and other businesses, is trouble-shooting.

"If we can help our customers provide foods that an 11-year-old wants, and that will help the households avoid battles over whether 'it's not good for you; I don't want you to have it,' then parents can deal with the bigger issues of the day," Hillen said.

Chips and dips are tween favorites, for example, but the problem is that they can contain significant amounts of fat. So Cargill used some of its array of trademarked ingredients, drawn

from plants, to create a higher-fiber chip that can be served up with a reduced calorie, lower-fat dip.

Feeding kids of the future

Cargill will launch the new strategy Sunday in New Orleans at the Institute of Food Technologists annual Food Expo, with the biggest exhibit of 850 companies running 1,000 booths. The show is expected to draw more than 20,000 attendees to view the latest scientific developments in food and ingredients, said Jim Klaphor, a spokesman for the organization.

For Cargill, it's the chance to gauge reaction from customers: foodmakers, restaurants and food service providers.

Cargill intends to showcase the results of its consumer research, including taste tests at Twin Cities schools, in a spacious booth featuring a "school cafeteria of the future," replete with a range of prototypes aimed at 8- to 12-year-olds. There's also a cafe featuring foods and beverage prototypes targeted at baby boomers ages 50 to 59.

The tweens, for instance, want sweets. So there are peanut butter cookies made with soy flour and protein, with nutrients that support tissue growth and development, and without unhealthy trans fat.

National research co-sponsored by Cargill shows that 71 percent of tweens say they need companies to make healthy versions of great-tasting treats. To that end, Cargill has come up with French fries that have zero grams of trans fat and less saturated fat and sodium, but plenty of zippy flavors, thanks to ethnic seasonings.

Driving the boomers' desires are top health concerns such as joint and heart health and avoiding trans fat. Cargill has come up with a cinnamon scone, for example, that uses no trans fat, and a heart-healthy smoothie that uses plant sterols and erythritol, which is an all-natural, no-calorie sweetener.

A more nutritious white bread

In Minnetonka, the smell of fresh-baked bread wafts from Cargill's Research Bakery Laboratory, where white-smocked food researchers have been busy for the past two weeks baking more than 3,000 hamburger buns that will become part of the taste-sampling exhibit in New Orleans.

These buns are aimed at tweens, who prefer the taste and texture of white bread to whole wheat, yet need the fiber of whole grain. To help parents meet that need, Cargill has developed an all-natural ingredient derived from the highly nutritious layer of wheat bran. Called aleurone, it's long been removed in the making of white bread, food scientist Bill Atwell said. Cargill is putting it back in the bread.

"It's where all the vitamins and fibers and minerals are," as well as plenty of antioxidants, said Atwell, who manages this bakery technology group. "The idea here is to make it more palatable than a whole-wheat bread is to many people, and something children would like better."

Joy Powell is at jpowell@startribune.com.

Food of the future?

Cargill Inc. wants to make food that's not only good for you but that you'll actually want to eat.

Here are some upcoming products:

For tweens (ages 8-12)

Problem: Tweens prefer white bread to whole wheat, yet need the fiber of whole grain. They like burgers, but want more low-fat products. They like chips, but don't seek out the healthier versions.

Solution: Fiber-enhanced hamburger bun with soy hamburger and tortilla chips

For boomers (ages 50-59)

Problem: Many are concerned with heart disease and high cholesterol.

Solution: A heart-healthy tropical smoothie with plant sterol esters that might reduce the risk of heart disease

Problem: Many boomers think healthier food should also taste good.

Solution: Reduced-calorie chocolate cheesecake with reduced fat and no sugar added.

Source: Cargill Inc.

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About Horizon Milling, LLC:

A leading US flour miller, Horizon Milling, LLC is a joint venture between CHS Inc. and Cargill. Horizon Milling combines the expertise of a global food ingredients manufacturer with the supply assurance capabilities of a national, farmer-owned cooperative to provide customers with innovative, flour-related product and service solutions. To learn more, visit <http://www.horizonmilling.com>.

About Cargill:

Cargill is an international provider of food, agricultural and risk management products and services. With 101,000 employees in 60 countries, the company is committed to using its knowledge and experience to collaborate with customers to help them succeed. For more information, visit <http://www.cargill.com>.