

Expert perspectives:

Bringing dairy joy for everyone!

80% of European consumers that participated in a recent survey declare to consume dairy on a daily basis, with taste, naturalness & health listed as the top three reasons to maintain their dairy consumption.* However, there is a growing appeal for alternatives to dairy too, particularly among more sustainability minded consumers or requirements for household members' diets. This is opening up opportunities to take a hybrid route or go fully plant-based. At the same time, label-friendliness, health, and indulgence all continue to trend.

With this in mind, Cargill offers a variety of solutions required for a successful dairy application (except for the dairy ingredients themselves!). Our portfolio features everything from oils & fats to plant-based proteins, texturizers, functional systems, sweeteners and even cocoa powders & chocolates. Furthermore, our expertise through insights, sensory capabilities and applications development means that we are there to truly support our customers.

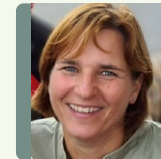
To show what's possible, we gathered a team of our dairy & dairy alternatives experts to discuss today's trends, and how to innovate to help meet these trends.



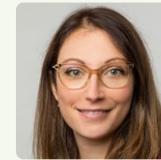
Our experts:



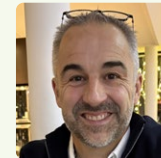
Karin Jenniskens
Marketing Manager
Dairy & Dairy Alternatives



Corinna Faustmann
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R&D Application Team
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Stephane Mauduit
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What are the trends that we see happening within dairy and dairy alternatives right now?

KARIN: The “healthier for me” trend, which focuses a lot on both sugar and fat reduction, continues to impact product development. This also incorporates more functional and enriched applications coming to the fore.

Next to that, there is a major trend towards label friendliness, and the use of familiar ingredients that consumers can recognize.

Additionally, a large part of the market growth is happening on the plant-based side. Here, we are also seeing hybrid products that bring together the best of both worlds – in combining dairy and plant-based.

And of course, from a customer perspective, there is increased concern around profitability and margin management, which is further fueling the drive towards cost consciousness and affordability for consumers.

Where do new market opportunities exist, particularly among younger consumers?

KARIN: At Cargill, we’re always looking to ensure that our R&D and application priorities are in line with today’s trends, and backed up by consumer insights. That’s why we recently (Jan-Feb, 2025) ran a proprietary qualitative consumer survey (Voxpopme) on dairy & dairy alternatives. We looked at attitudes among almost 1,300 European consumers (France, Germany, Spain and the UK) aged anywhere between 18-75.

As you can imagine, we got a wealth of insights on the different generations included in the survey. Overall, the research shows distinct differences across age groups, with younger consumers showing more flexibility toward dairy alternatives, influenced by both price and a focus on more sustainability, while older consumers remain more rooted in their traditional habits, due to taste preferences, and long-established routines.

We found, for example, that Gen Z consumers show a high openness to experimentation with alternative dairy products, particularly those that offer vegan options.



Regardless of the trend, Cargill offers a broad portfolio of products that can be used in dairy, dairy alternatives, and hybrids. It includes everything from texturizers, to vegetable proteins, to sweeteners, functional systems, edible oils & fats, and even cocoa & chocolate, and decorations & inclusions. Now under our new category-driven focus, we are offering a full portfolio dedicated to this category.



Corinna Faustmann, R&D Category Leader Dairy & Dairy Alternatives

What challenges do these trends present dairy and dairy alternative manufacturers?

ANNE-LAURE: A lot. Let's begin with incorporating plant-based ingredients. Dairy proteins and fats inherently deliver texture in a product, while sugars (in the form of lactose) bring in a lot of dry matter as well, in addition to sweetness. As a result, if you are removing these types of compounds, you will need effective texturizers to compensate for the texture loss.

Rebuilding the texture involves completely reassessing the emulsion. On top of that, when switching from a neutral tasting dairy protein to a plant-based one, you will need to mask the off flavors, should the plant protein bring any off note along. One solution to overcome these issues is going hybrid, which could involve incorporating anywhere between 1% plant-based protein to a 50/50 recipe fusing plant-based and dairy proteins.

STEPHANE: I think it's also important to stress the challenge of sugar reduction in full dairy products. When reducing or removing sugar, there will obviously be an impact on the taste because the product will be less sweet. But the texture will also be impacted. In this case,

we will need to bring some texturizers into the equation to achieve a texture that is as close as possible to a full sugar recipe. This is especially the case for dairy desserts.

With this background in mind, how can these trends be addressed?

ANNE-LAURE: Affordability obviously accounts for a large chunk of where our effort is going. It's an overarching trend, with most customers asking about recipe cost reduction and process optimization (e.g. reduced holding times for energy reduction). In dairy, the most expensive components are the milk protein and milk fat. We are able to replace those with texturizers, vegetable fats & oils and plant proteins to build back the texture, without impacting the mouthfeel.

Furthermore, we have developed recipes for our customers that meet the demand for sugar and fat reduction, as well as approved nutrition claims. We have also worked on protein enrichment when it comes to plant-based and hybrid applications. In all cases, it's about building back the sensory profile with texturizing solutions, but potentially also sweetening solutions.





And what about label friendliness?

CORINNA: Indeed. We are also working on label-friendly recipes. For example, we can work on creamy desserts containing ingredients like SimPure® label-friendly starch, and WavePure® gracilaria seaweed powder.

Furthermore, as a highly familiar ingredient, our pectin solutions can play a major role in desserts too. For example, UniPECTINE® ADF 660 C SB (low methoxyl pectin) is a label-friendly water-soluble texturizer, derived from citrus peels, that can deliver thickening properties.

Additionally, functional systems containing label-friendly texturizing ingredients like agar agar (which can be used in functional systems, for example) can perform here too.

How has Cargill been working to address these trends from an application standpoint?

ANNE-LAURE: As Corinna mentioned, we have been particularly working on showing the potential of our label-friendly solutions recently, to demonstrate that they are suitable for dairy, plant-based, and hybrid recipes. This has resulted in our efforts in developing 8 prototypes starring our ingredients. These include:

A label-friendly creamy dessert using WavePure® seaweed powder, SimPure® functional waxy corn starch to meet this trend.

When it comes to sugar reduction, we have created a Greek-style fruited yogurt using SimPure® and EverSweet®*, a next-generation stevia sweetener produced by fermentation.

A plant-based alternative to stirred yogurt based on pea protein, which is further texturized and enhanced creaminess through the combination of SimPure® and WavePure®.

Last but not least, a creamy chocolate dessert hybrid concept that offers the best of both dairy and plant-based. Besides pea protein and rapeseed oil, this concept uses a texturizer combination of UniPECTINE® pectin and Trilisse® functional g system to offer an indulgent mouthfeel and shiny appearance, without syneresis.

*EverSweet® is a product of Avansya, a joint venture between Cargill and dsm-firmenich.

The growing demand for more sustainable options can be supported by offering even better tasting hybrid, or fully plant-based options. It's all about incorporating plant-based solutions, while trying to maintain the nutritional benefits of dairy. Texture improvement will be key here.

Anne-Laure Rouger,
R&D Application Team Leader Dairy & Dairy Alternatives

What should we be looking out for in the future?

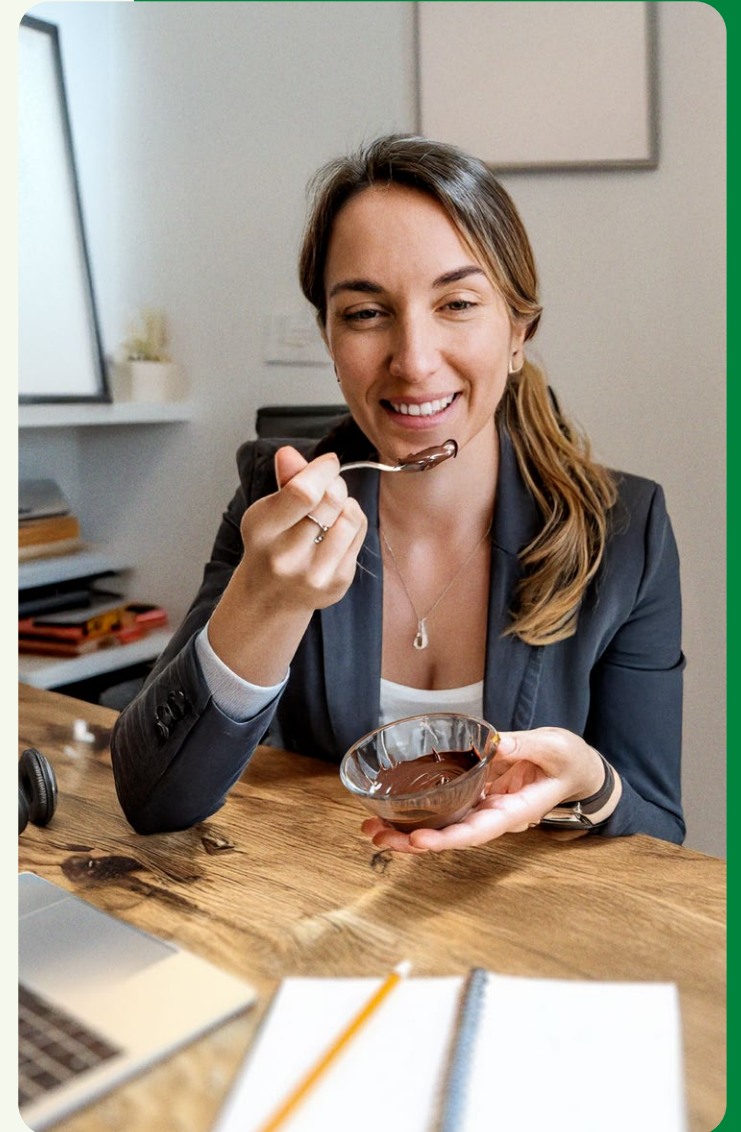
KARIN: Beyond what's been mentioned already, there is a clear trend towards sensory experiences. Consumer surveys have also shown that crossovers between different categories or between brands come to life in the dessert space with different layers for new sensory experiences; whether chocolate chunks, bakery or fruit components, or more. For example, the team has developed a concept for customers featuring crunchy chocolate layers and inclusions, which brings sensory excitement. It's all part of this clear trend towards conscious indulgence at an affordable price. I'd also like to stress that we continue to innovate in the health & nutrition space, through the incorporation of various health ingredients from our Specialized Nutrition portfolio.

STEPHANE: Indeed. What I would add is that we are innovating a lot within the label-friendly space. Here there is a need for a label-friendly starch that is more neutral in taste and color for dairy-sensitive products (white product).

We are developing SimPure® Bright label-friendly starches, which are particularly suitable for color sensitive applications.

At the same time, we are also innovating with WavePure® label-friendly seaweed powder and now have solutions for several dairy applications. We already had one solution for gelled desserts, but we now also offer options for creamy, neutral desserts. Additionally, we also have a WavePure® solution for the stabilization of chocolate milk, for example.

Last but not least, I'd like to stress that innovation can often mean taking a fresh look at a well-established ingredient. Pectin, for example, is a key product that can help our dairy customers meet several key trends, including texture build back in products that are reduced in fat or sugar, label friendliness, and more. Watch this space as we build new solutions to deliver day joy for everyone!



Your partner to deliver “dairy joy for everyone!”

Our team of passionate experts are excited to explore co-creation opportunities with you. Any questions? Reach out to us today and let’s deliver “dairy joy for everyone!” together.



Karin Jenniskens
Marketing Manager Dairy & Dairy Alternatives

Karin has over 15 years of experience in working in different marketing roles in the animal & human nutrition sector. She is currently the Commercial Marketing Manager for the Health & Nutrition categories at Cargill’s Food Solutions EMEA, including Dairy & Dairy Alternatives. Born in the Netherlands and living in Rotterdam, Karin has always had a keen interest in nutrition and health – in fact she’s a self-described “conscious consumer.”



Corinna Faustmann
R&D Category Leader Dairy & Dairy Alternatives

Corinna has over 20 years of experience in the food industry in various technical R&D positions in the B2B as well as B2C business specifically focused on dairy & dairy alternative applications. As EMEA R&D Category Leader dairy & dairy alternatives at Cargill, her focus is on providing leadership and growing the business by deployment the strategy in the dairy & dairy alternatives category.



Anne-Laure Rouger
R&D Application Team Leader Dairy & Dairy Alternatives

Anne-Laure has almost 15 years of experience in working in the dairy & dairy alternative world in both B2C and B2B. In her first 8 years at Cargill, Anne-Laure was R&D Application Specialist Dairy & Dairy Alternatives, where she was heavily involved in texturizers and more recently fats & oils and cocoa & chocolate. For the last 3 years, Anne-Laure has been leading the team to provide technical application assistance to our customer & manage the pipeline of application projects to answer the current & future needs of our customers.



Stéphane Mauduit
R&D Senior Technical Account Manager Dairy & Dairy Alternatives Europe

With almost 30 years’ experience in the specialty food industry, Stéphane is currently R&D Senior Technical Account Manager for Dairy & Dairy Alternatives in Europe, focused providing value added solutions in the Dairy and Dairy Alternatives industry. His role involves driving growth through innovative product solutions, managing projects, and building strong customer relationships. He has a broad range of experience especially around texturizers dairy applications.

More information: cargill.com/dairyjoy