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Is fibre the new protein?

New analysis from ANZ suggests fibre is emerging as one of the food industry's fastest-growing functional ingredients, expanding well beyond traditional products such as bran cereal and wholemeal bread into categories ranging from snack foods and yoghurt to soft drinks.

As explored in ANZ's latest Food for Thought report, growing consumer interest in gut health, satiety and functional nutrition is encouraging food and beverage manufacturers to incorporate fibre into a broader range of products.

One of the clearest examples of this shift is the emergence of fibre-fortified soft drinks. In the United States, PepsiCo has launched a prebiotic cola containing three grams of fibre per can – about double the fibre found in two slices of white bread – highlighting how fibre is increasingly being incorporated into everyday convenience products.

Michael Whitehead, Executive Director of Food, Beverage and Agribusiness Insights at ANZ, says fibre is increasingly showing the same characteristics that helped drive the protein boom.

"Protein went from being a nutrient to a marketing platform. Consumers started seeing it on yoghurt, drinks, snack bars and cereals, and many were willing to pay more for products that offered an additional health benefit.

"Fibre appears to be moving in a similar direction. What began in breakfast cereals is now appearing in soft drinks, snack foods, yoghurt and a growing range of convenience products."

The trend is being supported by a significant gap between recommended fibre intake and actual consumption.

Australians consume on average an estimated 24.8 grams of fibre per day for men and 21.1 grams for women, below suggested intake targets of 38 grams and 28 grams respectively.

Mr Whitehead says that, as awareness of digestive health and the role of prebiotics continues to grow, manufacturers are responding.

"McDonald's CEO recently [identified fibre](#) as a food industry trend to watch, while a growing number of global food and beverage brands are developing products linked to prebiotics and digestive health.

"Most consumers aren't going to wake up craving bran cereal, but they might choose a higher-fibre wrap, a gut-health yoghurt, a snack bar that promises to keep them fuller for longer, or even a soft drink containing prebiotic fibre. That's where this story becomes commercially interesting."

The report suggests the trend could create opportunities across the food, beverage and agribusiness supply chain, from grain and pulse producers through to ingredient suppliers, manufacturers and branded food companies.

Industry estimates indicate the global prebiotics market could grow from around \$17 billion in 2025 to more than \$50 billion in the early 2030s.

Further insights are available in the Q3 edition of ANZ's Food for Thought report.

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