

INGREDIENTS

Blending Science and Craftsmanship: Valio’s Approach to Dairy Nutrition for the Elderly

By Cath Isabedra



In an era marked by increasingly complex nutritional needs and a rapidly aging global population, the food industry faces a pressing need for innovation. This challenge is not just about providing sustenance but about offering tailored nutrition that caters to diverse health requirements. As life expectancies rise and dietary preferences evolve, there is an increasing demand for products that satisfy hunger and support health and wellness, particularly among the elderly. This shift calls for a transformation in food production, prioritizing targeted nutritional solutions and adapting to the unique needs of an aging society.

In this landscape, Valio emerges as a leader, pioneering a fusion of science and craftsmanship in dairy production. Their approach is a response to these evolving dietary challenges, offering specialized nutrition, particularly for the elderly. Valio’s commitment to combining scientific research with traditional dairy processing techniques marks a significant stride in addressing the dietary demands of our changing world.

Valio’s Scientific Legacy

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The Craft of Dairy Science

Valio's product development strategy integrates customer feedback, palatable taste, and good nutritional values, all backed by scientific research.

"All of Valio's product development is built around listening to the customer and consumer, a delicious taste, and good nutritional values, backed with scientific research. It's not something that we've picked up overnight – we've been doing it for over 100 years," states Emma Laivisto, who heads customer development for special nutrition industries at Valio.

An example of this blend is Nutri F+, a product that combines natural nutrients of milk with a full-bodied mouthfeel and a neutral, pleasant taste.

Addressing the Nutritional Needs of an Aging Population

By 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will [nearly double from 12 percent to 22 percent](#). Valio has recognized this demographic shift and is focusing on optimizing nutritional value for the elderly.

Milk, a key ingredient in many Valio products, is rich in calcium and high-quality protein and also contains Milk Fat Globule Membrane (MFGM), which is crucial for physical and cognitive functions in older people.

Advanced Technologies for Enhanced Health

Valio's expertise in milk fractionation allows them to produce products suitable for various consumer groups, including older adults. "Technologies such as hydrolysis of milk protein, which enhances protein absorption and gut comfort, enable us to produce products suitable for different consumer groups, from infants to seniors," notes Laivisto.

"This focus on specialized nutrition is a cornerstone of Valio's product strategy."

Natural Ingredients and Health Outcomes

Valio's clinical studies have demonstrated significant improvements in balance and physical performance in elderly subjects consuming products high in hydrolyzed milk protein and MFGM.

"In our recent clinical study, elderly subjects who consumed products high in hydrolyzed milk protein and MFGM showed significant improvement in balance and the short physical performance battery (SPPB) score, which includes testing balance, walking speed, and the ability to rise from a chair unaided, compared to the control group," Turpeinen highlights.

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The results suggest that hydrolysed protein and MFGM can benefit physical performance even without additional exercise. Hydrolyzed protein is also more rapidly and efficiently absorbed in the elderly than intact protein and causes fewer gastrointestinal problems. MFGM is rich in phospholipids, which provide benefits for brain health.
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Ethical and Sustainable Practices

Modern craftsmanship and innovation don't have to be at the cost of the environment.

Valio's commitment to high-quality, natural ingredients is matched by its dedication to sustainability and ethical responsibility. Laivisto affirms, "We have a very ambitious goal to be carbon neutral milk producers by 2035." This commitment extends beyond product quality to encompass all aspects of production, from sourcing to environmental impact.

Valio in the Global Dairy Market

Valio's strategic combination of science and craftsmanship has positioned it as a prominent player in the dairy industry. With a revenue of \$2.3 billion and a workforce of 4,457 employees, Valio's reach extends across various countries, including Finland, the US, China, and Russia. Their diverse product portfolio, ranging from milk powders to specialized nutrition products, caters to a wide array of consumer needs, further enhancing their global presence.

The Future of Dairy Craftsmanship

Looking forward, Valio is excited about expanding their senior nutrition products. "Following the positive results of our NutriSen study, our aim is to expand our product portfolio in senior nutrition and provide B2B customers products and ingredients rich in MFGM and hydrolysed protein," Turpeinen shares.

Dr. Anu Turpeinen



Emma Laivisto



Nourishing the Future: Valio's Vision for Dairy

Valio's approach to dairy production is a testament to how the fusion of science, craftsmanship, and nutrition can lead to innovative, health-promoting products. Their commitment to enhancing well-being through food, especially for the growing elderly population, sets a new standard in the dairy industry, making them a leader in innovation and ethical responsibility.

Valio's unique approach to dairy nutrition, blending scientific innovation with traditional craftsmanship, demonstrates their focus on enhancing well-being across all age groups. As the global population ages, Valio's focus on older people, backed by their extensive research and innovative products, positions them as a pioneer in the dairy industry, nourishing not just bodies but also communities and the environment.

With insights from **Dr. Anu Turpeinen, Nutrition Research Manager** and **Emma Laivisto, Customer Development Manager**

Anu has a strong academic background combined with experience in the food industry. She earned her PhD in human nutrition from the University of Helsinki, worked as a researcher for about 10 years, and was appointed as an Adjunct Professor in nutrition.

Emma has worked for over 14 years in the food industry, from B2B product & business development to sales management. At Valio, she leads customer development for special nutrition industries, such as healthy aging and active nutrition. Emma has a Master's and Bachelor of Science in Food Technology (Cereal Technology, University of Helsinki). Emma's core know-how is transforming nutritional research data into concrete commercial business projects.