



Pumped, and pumping

Of all the condition-specific sectors, sports supplements appear to be the hands-down champion seller. Nutrition Business Journal reports a million-dollar surge in sports supplements from 2011 to 2012 (\$9,240,000 to \$10,230,000), and predicts sales will increase by a million dollars every year through 2030. We give you the inside scoop, courtesy Larry Kolb, president of TSI, the manufacturer of Peak ATP, and David Janow, president of Axiom Foods and Growing Naturals.

Fi: How does the sports/performance segment look to you at this time?

LK: It remains a very strong market, especially because it is driven by innovation. Sport industry is always interested in what's new, especially products driving a new category. Consumers in this segment are very dialed in to the science, and are looking for the latest improvements to help in their performance.

DJ: Supplements aren't just for body builders anymore. With the changing perception of health and exercise in the mainstream market, there is a continuous increase in powders, RTDs, bars, chews and more targeting weekend warriors and casual exercise enthusiasts. Our plant protein ingredient production has had double-digit growth year after year as their markets are opening up. The message is catching on that every human needs to replenish their protein supply on a daily basis, and that there are excellent alternatives to whey. People are looking at the labels and realizing their favorite whey often has the sodium and cholesterol they need to avoid.

Fi: Where are the best markets for these products?

LK: The U.S. market is much stronger here than in Europe, Southeast Asia, or China. Australia, though, is becoming a strong market. Most of the brands that are launching here have a plan to launch in Australia. However, their regulatory climate is tough to negotiate, so companies must be careful, especially with products in solid dosage form. And I still see a lot of US brands launching in central Europe.

Fi: Examples of innovation?

LK: We're pioneering an area called muscu-

lar excitability, the ability to cause the muscles to contract. The greater the muscular excitability, the greater the force and endurance properties of the muscle. ATP increases the amount of calcium in the cell, and the release of calcium serves as a trigger for contraction. At the right pre-workout dosage, it provides measurable improvement in lifting and repetitions. Studies are underway.

DJ: Plant-based proteins that are as good as whey. With more than 30 million people in the U.S. realizing they have dairy issues, and recent research showing that Axiom Food's Oryzatein® rice protein is as beneficial as whey protein at building lean muscle, power and strength, plus aiding exercise recovery – we are slowly changing the way sports enthusiasts think about plant-based proteins. As a matter of fact, this study (<http://www.nutritionj.com/content/12/1/86>) has quickly become the most viewed study published in the *Nutrition Journal* and thus has the honor of being ranked "Highly Accessed."

There also is innovation happening in protein blends – that is, mixing protein from different sources (whey, rice, casein) to use as a post-workout supplement. Preliminary research indicates that protein blends may have some added benefit over a single source due to their varying amino acid profiles, plus rates of digestion and absorption. Innovation in protein powders is a must, whether it be protein blends, vegan proteins, or clean-label proteins, which add value (e.g. proteins that don't have soy, corn, aspartame, GMOs, hexane extraction process, etc.).

Fi: What's hindering growth?

LK: Adulteration. Anabolic steroids masquerading as other ingredients. FDA is doing a good job of going after these, but the next, the NDI process, is kind of a mess right now.

DJ: The slow creep of public knowledge. Crest had to teach the public about why they needed fluoride and so must we teach the public about plant proteins. While we've made progress getting the word out, there are still those die-hard whey fans that aren't interested at looking at change (or at their bloated gut, often due to a dairy intolerance.) Further growth is coming as we develop smoother plant proteins that meet the texture and flavor profiles consumers are looking for and as more and more research is published.

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