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PRESS RELEASE

FODMAP: A new direction in free-from and digestive health

The launch by Melbourne, Australia-based dietitian Sue Shepherd of a new range of low FODMAP foods is a world-first. It heralds the beginning of a new segment of the free-from market that – with its explicit promise to improve digestive health – has the potential to rival gluten-free.

The FODMAP diet – low in certain naturally-occurring fibres and sugars – was originally developed as a dietary therapy for patients with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). The name is an acronym for Fermentable, Oligosaccharide, Disaccharide, Monosaccharide and Polyols and the diet has solid, if somewhat limited, scientific evidence as a treatment for IBS.

“Many in the food industry view the scientific basis of FODMAPs as controversial,” says Julian Mellentin, editor of *New Nutrition Business*, which profiles the diet and the new product range in its June issue. “Some will deny that it is anything more than a niche medicalised concern of little broader relevance.

“However, gluten-free eating was also – not very long ago – dismissed as just such a niche,” he points out. “Thanks to the web, consumers can do their own research, conduct their own personal eating experiments and find what they believe works for them.”

Results of the diet can be immediate for many patients and the Sue Shepherd range fulfills the need to help FODMAP followers find convenient foods that are low in the relevant fibres and sugars. Shepherd, a digestive health expert in Australia, is the first person to have developed a range of foods specifically formulated to meet the needs of a FODMAP diet.

The FODMAP concept has a large potential pool of consumers: in Australia alone, there is an estimated 5 million people with IBS and non-celiac gluten intolerance. Worldwide, the condition, depending on how it is defined, can affect up to 20% of the population, with the highest rates in the United States and the European Union, according to figures from the World Gastroenterology Organization. IBS has traditionally been resistant to treatment, but the success of the FODMAP approach for many people is giving the idea wings.

“These forces might yet make FODMAPS a force to be reckoned with – after all, digestive health has been one of the biggest trends in the business of food and health for over 20 years,” says Mellentin.

“Addressing digestive health issues is the basis of successful brands such as Activia probiotic yoghurt. Digestive health also lies at the core of why many people choose gluten-free foods. And addressing digestive health issues – IBS – is the aim of the FODMAPS diet.

“Who’s to say that more consumers won’t find information about it on the web and favour ‘FODMAP-friendly’ foods? Or that it won’t steadily grow to become a force – a niche force perhaps but a force nonetheless – as gluten-free has done?”

“Smart companies will keep an eye on FODMAPS,” he concluded.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. FODMAPs refers to carbohydrates, with specific sugars and fibers, that cause gastro-intestinal distress for some people. All are fermentable foods (represented by the F in the FODMAPS acronym) broken down by bacteria in the large bowel. They include: Oligosaccharides, such as fructans and galacto-oligosaccharides (in wheat, onions, garlic, and legumes); Disaccharides or lactose (in milk, ice cream and custard); Monosaccharides or fructose in excess of glucose (in high fructose corn syrup, honey, watermelon, apple and agave); and Polyols, such as sorbitol and mannitol (in apples, pears, watermelon, sugar-free gums and candies). FODMAP molecules are poorly absorbed in the small intestine. They move on to the large intestine, where they are rapidly fermented by gut bacteria causing a variety of unpleasant symptoms for some people.

2. Sue Shepherd, senior lecturer at LaTrobe University, was the first to put the pieces together and tie them all to IBS. She developed the low FODMAP diet in 1999 to bring relief to patients in both her private and clinical practice. Her success caught the attention of gastroenterologists and she was eventually awarded Young Investigator of the Year by the Gastroenterological Society of Australia for the work. The Sue Shepherd low FODMAP food range includes many of the foods Shepherd identified as problematic for dieters and consists of a Slow Cooked Vegetable Stock; two pastas sauces, two soups, Roasted Pumpkin + a Hint of Sage and Lamb and Vegetable; and two meal kits. The entire range is also gluten-free, made without onion and garlic, with no artificial colours, flavours and preservatives. <http://www.sueshepherdfoods.com>

3. To further the overall educational process about FODMAPs, Monash University, also in Melbourne, has developed an app available through Apple and Google to help consumers identify low FODMAP foods from the real time research information at Monash. As of late May, Gibson said it has become the number two app at Google in the US. “This will bring much greater awareness of FODMAPS.”

4. Julian Mellentin is one of the world’s few international specialists in the business of food, nutrition and health. He is director of *New Nutrition Business* (www.new-nutrition.com) which provides case studies and analysis of success and failure in the global nutrition business and is used by more than 1,700 corporate subscribers in 42 countries. For more information about New Nutrition Business, or to arrange an interview with Julian Mellentin, contact Allene Bruce at allene.bruce@new-nutrition.com.