

Food Industry Looks to GI Symbol as a Signpost for Success

Sydney, May 2005: A consumer study conducted by A C Nielsen shows that Australian public awareness and understanding of the importance of the GI (Glycemic Index) is high. Researchers involved in the project believe that Australia's awareness of GI is possibly the highest in the world.

The study revealed that 86% of respondents were aware of GI (up from 28% in 2002) and that 57% of shoppers would use The GI Symbol as an incentive to switch brands. Low GI foods are helping to push Atkins-style products off menus and supermarket shelves.

The study findings will be a key indicator for the food industry, with key players closely tracking consumer demand for low GI foods. Results from the research prove that consumers consider the official GI Symbol to be an influential shopping tool, making the GI Symbol a signpost for success for food marketers.

The study was conducted on behalf of Glycemic Index Limited, a non-profit Australian company whose members are the University of Sydney, Diabetes Australia and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Glycemic Index Limited was established to help consumers make healthier lifestyle choices by combining the benefits of low GI and sound nutrition. With this in mind, the company has trademarked 'a stamp', an eye-catching GI rating symbol used on food packaging to alert consumers to low GI ratings. The 2005 study shows that the official GI Symbol is now an essential marketing device in the Australian food industry, with international interest also coming from European, UK, Canadian and USA universities and food manufacturers.

To be eligible for the symbol, foods must be submitted for testing at an accredited laboratory, and once they have met the strict GI nutritional guidelines determined by dietitians and nutritionists involved in the program, food manufacturers can license the use of The GI Symbol on their approved products.

World renowned GI expert, author and Sydney University academic, Professor Jennie Brand-Miller (The Glucose Revolution, The GI Factor) is one of the driving forces behind the initiative alongside well-respected dietitian Alan Barclay from Diabetes Australia.

"It is excellent to see people taking on board the findings from our GI research and using them to improve their lifestyle and health," says Prof Brand-Miller. "I really feel that the GI Symbol is an excellent tool to help people make the right food choices because it provides balance and scientific accuracy about GI."

In the three years since the original survey, understanding of the far-reaching health benefits of low GI foods has also increased. This indicates that GI is here to stay and that the importance of GI rated foods is therefore equally expected to increase.

77% of respondents identified that the GI has something to do with sugar and 59% of those knew that GI relates to the regulation of blood sugar (glucose) levels. Aside from assisting in the management of diabetes, obesity and heart disease, 86% of respondents knew that GI was good for everybody.

"The aim is to get everybody to consider low GI options every day at every meal," said Prof Brand-Miller. "Our GI symbol is helping consumers to do just that."

91% of consumer respondents said that they consider the GI symbol to be a useful shopping tool. Additionally this near blanket figure was backed by a further 57% saying that they would be likely to switch to a brand that carries the official GI Symbol, once they knew about the credibility of the programme.

Gareth Hughes, Executive Officer at Glycemic Index Limited, who helped create the famous National Heart Foundation "tick" in Australia and New Zealand, said that the survey results are further evidence that Main Grocer Buyer's are confident using signposts from credible and trusted organisations to make healthier food choices.

According to Mr Hughes, the GI Symbol is the symbol for the 21st century. "We are confident that as awareness and understanding of the GI continues to increase, so too does the power of The GI Symbol," said Mr Hughes. "More and more food manufacturers are feeling the consumer

demand for low GI foods and are consulting with us to meet the standards so that they too can use the official GI symbol.”

Currently there are over 90 different products on Australian supermarket shelves bearing the GI Symbol. Products such as Burgen Soy-Lin bread, Dairy Farmer’s Lite White milk , Nestle All Natural 99% Fat Free yoghurts and Cottee’s 100% Fruit spreads all bear the official GI Symbol.

About the Author

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