

The 'sportification' of natural products

There has been a growing consciousness of leading healthier lifestyles amongst the general population, seeing increased demand for products that contain nutrients essential for keeping the body at its optimum.

The South African sports nutrition market was worth R555,6 million in 2016, says Bruce Dennison, president of the Health Products Association of South Africa (HPASA). "Consumers are tapping into this trend and this market is expected to be worth R812.9 million by 2021, according to a Euromonitor International report."



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Natural products that ensure athletes and many ordinary people who want to maintain a healthy lifestyle and get the most out of their exercise regimes contain vitamins, minerals, supplements and organic substances, carbohydrates, proteins and fats. And it's a trend that hasn't gone unnoticed by the makers of comestibles. "Many companies are latching onto this trend of the 'sportification' of food and drinks," says Dennison. Companies highlight their products' nutritional content in their packaging to appeal to the health enthusiast as well as the more avid sportsperson, and also sometimes market their product via images of health and sport.

"If a label has ingredients with sweeteners, artificial ingredients and flavourants, best avoid it. It is much easier nowadays to find all-natural products offering fast post-effective recovery without the unnecessary additives", says Vanessa de Ascencao, nutritional consultant and member of the HPASA.

De Ascencao says sports enthusiasts are realising that changes in diet can benefit all aspects of training, including endurance during exercising, and better and faster recovery. Incorporating the correct vitamins and minerals in daily food intake can help the body bounce back after a strenuous workout, while reducing the risk of injuries.

As an example, curcumin is a bright yellow chemical, and derived from turmeric, a well-known spice, and has become a leading herbal supplement. "Curcumin is probably one of the most researched extracts, with over 700 clinical studies conducted thus far," says De Ascencao. It is renowned for its anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties. After a strenuous workout, curcumin can help decrease delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). Adding turmeric to smoothies, soups and roast veg is becoming extremely popular.

Other notable supplements that aid fitness are the B vitamins, which are instrumental in fighting fatigue, muscle weakness and joint pain. Magnesium also has a role to play in relieving muscle aches and spasms and helps increase energy, and can be found in spinach and kale.

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