



Immune Health: Opportunities Abound for Natural Solutions

Immune health was an important and growing concern even before the 2020 pandemic, and it is now inconceivable that the importance of immunity support could diminish in any short term.

A MarketPlace study conducted in the Fall of 2019 verified that immunity ranked fifth on the list of consumer demands relative to 20 other health categories. In June 2020, when they did a follow-up study, immunity moved into the third spot, following prevention/overall wellness and gut/digestive health¹. Also in the June study, 61% of U.S. dietary supplement consumers said they have increased the use of dietary supplements to help support immunity.

With school closings, travel restrictions, concert and sports venue closures and a large part of the population working from home, we live in a world much different than in years past. Now there is a more persistent and urgent search for ingredients and products that support immunity. Consumers are proactively looking for what they can do to manage their health beyond social distancing, face coverings and hand washing. While demand for immune support has

traditionally been seasonally influenced, we are now taking more proactive action, and seeking more natural products and long-term solutions to health and wellbeing.

Consumers are also showing interest in immunity with their wallets. For the year ended (Y/E) Mar. 22, 2020, U.S. total mass multi-outlet (MULO) and convenience store dollar sales of immunity products jumped 199% and vitamins were up 77% according to IRI's Apr. 4 COVID-19: Economy Report. It also reported that the number of immunity product buyers in the U.S. increased by 125%.

Interest in, and purchases of, immunity products – in particular those touting clean label, natural, plant-based, sustainable ingredients – is surging across all age groups. Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers alike, are searching for effective solutions and support.

Consumers now have more access to data than ever before. 70% of Americans use the internet to get health information and make health decisions – and they are taking a proactive stance like never before in researching and managing their own health.

Sustainability-marketed goods are still highly valued, and brands should understand the sustainability practices of its suppliers. One study conducted in June 2020, in partnership by The NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business and IRI®, tracked changes since its 2019 analysis that examined consumer purchases of sustainability-marketed goods. This study reported that on average, across 35 CPG categories examined, sustainability-marketed products enjoyed a sizable premium of 39% over conventionally marketed products². It also revealed that sustainability-marketed products grew over seven times faster than conventional products, demonstrating consumers' strong preference for these products and their general willingness to pay higher prices.

Looking across a variety of indicators – from Amazon best selling lists to Google Trends, industry reports spanning nutraceuticals, food, beverage, and personal care, and the demand we see at Layn Natural Ingredients, some key botanical ingredients trending globally in the popular immune-support space, include:

- Andrographis
- Broccoli Seed

- Cistanche
- CBD
- Echinacea
- Elderberry
- Ginger
- Grape Seed
- Green Tea
- Honeysuckle
- Pu'er Tea
- Quercetin
- Reishi Mushrooms
- Resveratrol
- Rhodiola
- Rice Bran
- Rosemary
- Schisandra
- Sea Buckthorn
- Seaweed

Some of these ingredients, such as Echinacea, Elderberry and Resveratrol, are well-known for their immune support potential. Others are gaining new awareness due to entry into new markets, increasing science and broadening consumer awareness. Some noteworthy examples that offer brands high differentiation opportunity, include:

Cistanche, which is also commonly known as desert ginseng, is a unique botanical that grows in dry conditions around the world. Its immune enhancing and anti-aging properties have been studied for its beneficial effects on macrophage production which is critical to immune function³.

Pu'er Tea pronounced "poo-air" is a special form of fermented green tea that originated in the Yunnan province of China. It's usage in stimulating the immune system along with many other health benefits has been used for thousands of years as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Pu'er tea, like Cistanche, helps to support healthy macrophage production an important component of the immune system⁴.

Broccoli Seed is a potent source of glucoraphanin – a glucosinolate that is converted to sulforaphane in the body. Sulforaphane is a powerful antioxidant that has been demonstrated to help support healthy immune function⁵.

Honeysuckle has demonstrated new potential for immune support. One study found that Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*

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ONCE A SEASONAL CONCERN, THERE'S NOW PERSISTENT DEMAND FOR EFFECTIVE, NATURAL IMMUNE SUPPORT

caerulea L.) shows high health potential and is a promising source of numerous bioactive compounds, mainly anthocyanins, phenolic acids and flavonols and the unique presence of iridoids, which have demonstrated anti-inflammatory and antioxidant capabilities⁶.

Quercetin from *Sophora japonica* is a flavonoid found in many fruits and vegetables that has been studied extensively for its antioxidant and immune boosting properties. It also supports a healthy inflammatory response which is of significance due to the effects that inflammatory cytokines can have on the immune system⁷.

We continue to see a broadening of the nutraceutical and sports nutrition markets into mainstream segments, and food and beverage seeking more function. There is increasing demand for delivery formats that work with their lifestyles. Increasingly, consumers want their supplements in convenient, familiar and preferred formats, which today can include everything from gummies and chewables, to snacks and ready-to-drink beverages. While currently, there is still a slight preference for supplements in pill form, this is declining. A recent MarketPlace study reported that preference for pills over functional foods specifically for immune support has declined from 89% in 2019 to 72% in 2020¹.

The use of botanical ingredients in trending delivery formats requires expertise, and can present formulation challenges. Brands developing these products should carefully consider:

- Proper/recommended dosages and levels of botanicals and active ingredients
- The efficacy of health support and

other functional benefits consumers seek

- Achieving desirable taste, aroma and texture
- Preservation and shelf-stability
- Special dietary preferences and intolerances
- The importance of ingredient and production transparency and accurate labeling

For over 25 years, Layn Natural Ingredients has been innovating and investing in advanced R&D efforts to develop standardized botanical extracts tailored for specific markets, formats and applications. In addition to its leadership in sustainable agricultural practices, innovation, and extraction methods, it also brings a depth of formulation experience and works closely with manufacturers and formulators to find unique solutions, overcome challenges, and achieve functionality goals while meeting customer demands. ●

About the Author

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