



Natural Products Expo West Attracts More Than 65,000 to Anaheim

by [Eric Munson](#) | March 27, 2024

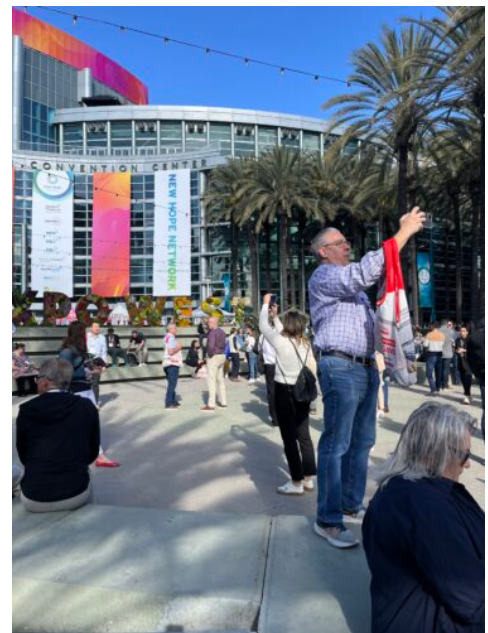
Natural Products Expo West was held at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, CA from March 12-16. According to New Hope Network/Informa Markets, the show drew more than 65,000 industry professionals and more than 3,300 exhibiting companies.

According to show organizers, the Expo West featured a large array of brands spanning 30 categories, attracting 840 first-time exhibitors and around 700 international brands. Products ranged from natural and specialty foods and beverages, supplements, personal care, organic and lifestyle.

“The energy of this year’s Expo West was palpable, and I believe will cement 2024 as a positive year for our brands, buyers and community,” said Carlotta Mast, senior vice president of New Hope. “The thousands of new products on display here, the connections made and the ideas shared will influence the future of natural, organic and conscious CPG [consumer packaged goods].”

This year’s show also featured numerous environmental and social sustainability initiatives, as well as new programs, according to show organizers.

“This year’s event featured and elevated many of the efforts we’ve been prioritizing and investing in to ensure we’re continually raising the bar on attendee experience, customer



value and event sustainability,” said Lacey Gautier, vice president, events at New Hope. “New programs included a new local buyers’ program, buyer-only show floor hours, an augmented reality experience and zero-waste product sampling at the Fresh Ideas Organic Marketplace.”

Off The Show Floor

Expo West featured numerous educational events on a variety of topics.

A keynote featured Chef Sean Sherman, founder of the North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS). He shared the history of Native American oppression and his efforts to revitalize indigenous food systems and “decolonize” the restaurant experience.

Sherman is the founder of Owamni, a Native American restaurant in Minneapolis, MN aimed at offering a selection of indigenous foods while removing many colonial ingredients, such as wheat flour, cane sugar and dairy.

Herb Pharm (Williams, OR) hosted an event featuring mycologist, herbalist and author Dr. Christopher Hobbs. In his lecture, he discussed the benefits of mushroom mycelium and fruiting bodies. He also discussed the best processing and extraction methods, organic cultivation, sourcing and the benefits of domestically grown mushrooms.

“Mushrooms rival animal products for their nutritional content in B vitamins, minerals, trace minerals, proteins, fatty acids and probiotic content,” Hobbs said.

Attorneys Todd Harrison and Claudia Lewis, partners with Venable LLP, spoke about the legal issues of the day regarding natural products, including the Modernization of Cosmetics Regulation Act (MoCRA), the Food Traceability Rule, the Food and Drug Administration’s latest guidance on new dietary ingredient notifications, flavor claims, Proposition 65, enforcement activity, class action lawsuits, and more. Since COVID-19, they said, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has stepped up at the border with more testing of imports. They added that MoCRA had been on the backburner but now has seen big changes with labelling requirements and safety issues. The attorneys also cautioned brands to not use the word “natural” in product descriptions. “Even the word ‘wholesome’ implies natural,” Harrison said. They also advised caution when using certain terms on product labels, such as “zero sugar” and “no sugar added.” “Made in the USA” label claims are regulated by U.S. Customs Service, as well as the Federal Trade Commission, they noted, and companies need to be aware, for example, that just having

an American flag on a product label may wrongly insinuate that the product is “Made in the USA.”

Trends

Many of the exhibitors found the opportunity to walk the show floor and observe various trends.

Andreas Koch, marketing director for Natural Path Silver Wings (Nashville, TN), said the show felt largely the same from prior years. “I didn’t notice any major trends like the CBD craze from four years ago, or the omega-3 explosion from the early to middle 2000s,” Koch said. “I did notice many brands launching new combination ingredient blends as new line extensions.”

“I loved it! The attendance felt like it was back to pre-covid levels, and the energy was positively charged!” said Dave Slagle, senior director of brand partnerships at California-based Radicle Science.

Sarah Burden, senior director of brand partnerships at Radicle Science observed an explosion of popularity for functional foods and beverages, particularly botanical non-alcoholic drinks and “snacks with benefits,” or “conventional foods masquerading as supplements,” she said.

“I’m not aware of any recent litigation or enforcement that’s occurred in this blurry area, so I’ll be very curious to see what path the new brands and regulators ultimately take,” Burden said. “One thing is certain: whether you’re marketing a dietary supplement or a conventional food, having rigorous clinical data to substantiate your marketing claims is always a wise move.”

Radicle Science Co-founders Dr. Jeff Chen and Pelin Thorogood added, “We were grateful to hear how many people found our Expo West education session on Navigating the Future of Supplements helpful. It was a standing-room only session, showing how much our industry is interested in clinical research, cutting-edge tech, and marketing with compliance.”

Jim Roza, chief scientific officer from Layn Natural Ingredients (China/Irvine, CA), said the show was well-run and was an excellent venue for networking. There was also a lot of interest in the potential applications for Layn’s ingredients, particularly SophorOx, Bio+Resveratrol and Bio+Quercitrin.

Roza observed numerous trends including biotics, mushrooms, collagen, hydration and inflammation.

“There is a heightened awareness regarding inflammation, pain and its causes coming off a worldwide pandemic,” Roza said. “Chronic inflammation due to diet, smoking, and obesity have all been implicated as comorbidities in the deaths of individuals who succumbed to the virus. This has led to heightened awareness regarding the need to mitigate inflammation and pain in the pursuit of better health.”

Roza added non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) have been the mainstay but are slowly being replaced by botanical formulations because of the many side effects.

“Formulas composed of ingredients, such as turmeric, green tea, pomegranate and quercetin, have all been shown to inhibit the release of pro-inflammatory cytokines that can cause inflammation,” Roza said. “As a result, more research is being devoted to studying these botanicals as a safer alternative to commonly prescribed anti-inflammatories.”

Dr. Nazlie Latefi, co-founder and chief scientific officer at New York-based Biovanta, agreed with Roza that inflammation was a popular trend at the show.

“Inflammation underlies so many different diseases and must be addressed for optimal health and recovery,” Latefi said. “It is an area where unfortunately many traditional pharmaceuticals fall short. Natural products often do a better job at fighting inflammation because they target multiple points in the inflammatory pathway.”

Biovanta makes Immune Complex, a blend of natural ingredients designed to address inflammation. An effective anti-inflammatory formula must allow the body to respond to the threat, but also repair itself, Latefi said.

A Place to Connect

Matthew Liebenauer, regional sales executive for Cambridge Commodities (United Kingdom/Lincoln, CA), said the 2024 show was his best experience at Expo West to date.

“I absolutely loved Expo this year—the positive energy was palpable all around and I always look forward to the time where I get to see many of the national clients and top prospects all in one place,” Liebenauer said. “Having face time in person with my clients to get a better understanding of their current needs and how we can offer support is vital to the success of our business and achieving our goals.”

Cambridge Commodities mainly focuses on organic superfoods and functional ingredients and received a lot of positive response at the show.

“We found that the positive response to our products at Expo was incredibly strong and even drew interest from brands whose focus had largely been on conventional ingredients up until this point,” Liebenauer said. “Many major household brands are formulating organic lines these days and I love to see growing support for organic and regenerative agriculture all around.”

Alina Slotnik, vice president, product marketing and strategy at California-based Brightseed said the show was a great opportunity to connect with other industry leaders and brands to showcase new products and projects.

“We had quite a few exciting conversations with a variety of brands interested in bringing more health benefits, especially gut, to foods, beverages, supplements and more during Expo West,” Slotnik said. “Brightseed has proudly exhibited at Expo West for the last few years, so we’re very familiar with the conference and enjoy seeing the industry evolve year over year.”

Brightseed showcased its bioactive ingredient Bio Gut Fiber, a novel source of prebiotic dietary fiber made from upcycled hemp hulls and its new Organic Bioactive Fiber. “More and more consumers understand the importance of the gut microbiome, particularly prebiotics and probiotics,” Slotnik said. “This is a trend that we’re especially excited about. We see the next frontier of this space as synbiotics—the combination of microbes and (probiotics) and prebiotics (plant substrates) that provide greater and more robust health benefits to consumers than probiotics alone.”

The Future

Natural Products Expo West will return to the Anaheim Convention Center March 4-8, 2025. For more information visit www.expowest.com.