



## MARKETING EGGS THAT GIVE YOU EXTRA

**In January The Ranger featured an article explaining how, by supplementing laying hen's feed, it is possible to produce enriched eggs that have the potential to improve the health and nutrition of those that eat them.**

The concept offers a way to differentiate and add value throughout the supply chain, taking advantage of new marketing opportunities for eggs. In his Nuffield Report published last year on egg marketing, Jamie McIntosh investigated the enriched egg market. Featuring examples from around the world he demonstrated that the versatility and nutritional value of eggs lend themselves to health-related branding. Launching in July this year St Ewe Free Range Eggs in Cornwall have added to their award-winning portfolio of free-range hen's eggs and developed a 'super-nutritious' everyday egg; specifically, for the health and wellness market.

### **Eggs are a natural medicine**

Jamie McIntosh, regional technical manager for Lohmann GB discussed his research into enriched eggs as part of his 2019 Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust Report - Explore new ways eggs can be marketed to maintain a steady increase in egg consumption. "Eggs are a natural medicine, promoting health and wellbeing and should be considered instrumental in preventing and alleviating existing health conditions. As a food, in terms of nutrient density and completeness, cost and versatility - the egg is unrivalled. A key driver for me in finding new ways of increasing egg consumption has been to

support efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of our nation.”

Jamie believes it's important to talk to younger segments of the population when promoting the nutritional benefits of eggs. “Research increasingly focuses on the importance of nutrition during pregnancy, birth and the first two years of life. Key nutrients during this time are protein, polyunsaturated fatty acids, iron, zinc, copper, iodine, folate and vitamins A, D, B6 and B12. Eggs are a rich source of most of these nutrients. And for pregnant women eggs are a particularly useful source of choline, which is important for foetal brain development.”

He also highlighted that maintaining muscle mass becomes more difficult as people age and that egg consumption has benefits due to the high-quality protein and vitamin D content. “The protein can be easily distributed throughout the day rather than in one meal, chances of maintaining muscle mass and strength increase. Eggs can easily be part of breakfast, lunch or dinner – so are a valuable component of diets for older people. And are one of the few foods that contain vitamin D, an essential nutrient that many people of all ages are not getting enough of in the UK, especially in the winter months.” Symptoms of deficiency include tiredness, weakness, muscle and bone pain.

### **It's what's on the inside that counts**

The connection between food and health is becoming more apparent to consumers. Producers have the ability to promote the fact that eggs can deliver health-giving nutrients, over and above those they already contain. As detailed in the previous article vitamin D, omega 3/DHA and selenium are the most commonly used nutrients to enrich eggs. Omega 3's are essential fatty acids and DHA is the one that is particularly important

## So what makes enriched eggs super?



### **Maintains & Promotes Heart Health**

- DHA Omega-3 contributes to the normal function & maintenance of the heart & brain, whilst promoting heart health & a healthy circulation.
- DHA Omega-3 plays an important part in carbohydrate metabolism & insulin sensitivity, allowing for long-term maintenance of normal blood glucose concentrations.



### **Supports Brain & Muscle Function**

- Vitamin D contributes to the maintenance of normal muscle function.
- DHA Omega-3 contributes to the cognitive function in the elderly; helping to slow the early onset of Alzheimer's disease.



### **Immune System Support**

- Selenium & Vitamin D contribute to the normal function of the immune system.
- Selenium contributes to antioxidant activity in the body & helps regulate the thyroid hormone.



### **Maternal Health & Development**

- Folate contributes to healthy maternal tissue growth during pregnancy.
- DHA Omega-3 supports major infant brain, eye & nerve development during pregnancy & throughout the first two years of life.



Santa Reyes of Colombia has a healthy line of egg products and “SUPER REYECITOS” are specifically targeted at school children.

Photo supplied by Jamie McIntosh

for cognitive function and heart health. Research has shown that increasing dietary levels of omega 3/DHA can lower cholesterol, regulate blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Nikki Owen, Head of Marketing at St Ewe Free Range Eggs summarised the benefits of selenium. “Selenium is a naturally occurring mineral that has had very little exposure, but this super nutrient is in fact, one of the 13 essential minerals needed to maintain optimal health and offers immune system support. Even in small doses selenium plays a vital role in important processes within the body including; hair and nail strengthening, collagen promotion, regulating the thyroid hormone and is an effective antioxidant - helping to protect cells from oxidative stress. Jamie added that “those deficient in selenium are more likely to develop problems with fatigue and mental slowing.”

### Enriched eggs around the world

Branding enriched eggs adds more marketing opportunities promoting other aspects such as health and lifestyle benefits of these products. Jamie McIntosh talked about Santa Reyes of Colombia that has a healthy line of egg products and that one of the brands is specifically targeted at school children - Super Reyecitos. “The focus of the brand is to feed eggs to children to help strengthen the brain during school years. The eggs contain higher levels three specific nutrients, achieved by supplementing the hen’s feed. Vitamin B9 (for good oxygenation of the blood, avoiding anaemia), selenium (for adequate activity in the central nervous system) and omega 3 (to help the brain to improve capacity for learning and cognitive function).” Bonegg is a brand from Santa Reyes focusing on slightly different aspects including organic selenium, and also vitamins D and E, claimed to be ideal for skin and memory. “They are marketed as

Akita, one of the largest egg producers in Japan, have developed several enriched brands.

Photo supplied by Jamie McIntosh



eggs with antioxidant properties - courtesy of the selenium and vitamin E - helping to eliminate harmful free radicals and other peroxides. This, in turn, helps control the aging processes of the skin and the vitamin D helps to maintain calcified bones.”

Akita, one of the largest egg producers in Japan, have developed several enriched brands. “These include Vita Gold – a multi-vitamin enriched pack, containing 9 added vitamins including B1, B12, A, D, E and K and the omega fatty acids, DHA and EPA. Fitness Eggs, a new line for Danaeg has also has a higher Omega 3 content and is sold in distinctive pink packaging to stand out on the supermarket shelf. The are several brands around the globe focusing on Omega 3 or DHA content including Omegg and Santa Anita.

In the US Egglands Best describe their eggs as having more of the good stuff, compared to a

standard egg: double the omega 3, 6 times more vitamin D, 10 times more vitamin E, double the B12, as well as being higher in lutein and selenium. They also claim that their eggs stay fresher for longer and have 25% less saturated fat. Jamie McIntosh used the St Ewe Boost the Roost as an example of a successful enriched egg brand in the UK. The product is enriched with extra selenium included in the hen’s diet. “A change in EU law allowed for a higher level of selenium to be present in eggs; although there is an increased production cost and therefore higher retail price, sales were good.”

### History of the Super Egg

Rebecca Tonks explained that St Ewe originally launched their Boost the Roost brand in 2013. “At this point the eggs were just enriched with selenium and it was a hard sell, as not many people knew what selenium was. It was difficult to educate the

Launching in July this year St Ewe launched "SUPER EGGS" aimed at the health and wellness market



public by ourselves, particularly as we didn't have a huge marketing budget available. However, as with all challenges it was also a learning exercise. Research has shown it is more efficient to supplement DHA directly rather than adding omega 3 rich oils, so it seemed the sensible option in many ways. The general public already knew about the benefits of omega 3, so there was less education required. Selenium we know, adds to the efficacy and at a time when people are increasingly concerned about the what they are eating."

St Ewe have their own free-range flocks at the home farm in Cornwall as well as using contracted family run producer farms. "Our enriched eggs are produced by our own flocks. This enables us to monitor the birds closely and control the quality of the product with our Head of Food Technology. We send samples for analysis every 12 weeks to enable

us to make the health claim benefit that the eggs are high in DHA omega 3 and selenium." Rebecca also sees the benefits in terms of hen health and egg quality. "Particularly later in the laying cycle we have seen noticeable improvements in egg quality; both in terms of shell strength and Haugh units. We have very low mortality rates and by supporting their immune systems we are improving their resistance to challenges, particularly in our older units. We have super healthy, happy hens laying super healthy eggs."

As already discussed, eggs are also an accessible, adaptable and sensibly priced health food – in most cases cheaper and more bioavailable than supplements. "The form that you take up the selenium and DHA in is either used by the body or stored for when it needs. In comparison with inorganic mineral sources where much is lost if it's not required at the time of ingestion. Within the egg the

**REBECCA TONKS** and her family have over 30 years' experience as poultry farmers and have developed bespoke diets for their hens, allowing them to bring unique brands to market.



nutrients are easily digestible and when consumed regularly, build up reserves to support immunity."

Forging a link with Pancreatic Cancer UK came from a study from Liverpool University linking selenium with the protection of the cells around the pancreas. "And with family history of pancreatitis in the family, it is a very important issue for us."

### **Homing in on quality**

It is well-known that eggs have an extensive range of benefits; high nutritional value, versatility and value for money. Super Eggs® are the next generation in egg nutrition and St Ewe's free-roaming hens are fed a scientifically developed 'Super Feed', containing high levels of natural selenium (Se), vitamin D and DHA Omega-3; which have health benefits for both hen and human

consumers. Nikki explained how, "all of us at St Ewe have worked tirelessly to bring forward the launch of Super Eggs in order to offer the Great British public a product that not only tastes delicious, comes from high welfare happy hens, but is also incredibly nutritious. Eating yourself well has never been so important and we firmly believe that you are what you eat!"

Rebecca Tonks and her family have over 30 years' experience as poultry farmers and have developed bespoke diets for their hens, allowing them to bring unique brands to market. "When it comes to nutrition, we are driven by our own family's need to find healthy alternatives to supplements and this is why we developed Super Eggs. They contain high levels of Selenium and DHA Omega-3 that are easily digested and absorbed by the body. This offers great

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immune and antioxidant support, with DHA Omega-3 also linked to improving heart health. Now that we have vigorously tried and tested these incredible eggs, we are very pleased to share the next generation of free-range eggs!"

Consumer psyche has shifted dramatically over the past few months and the demand for eggs and healthier food choices has never been so prevalent. Super Eggs are available at retailers across the South West, including 100 Tesco stores and nationally with Cotswold Fayre. Jess Robinson, Buyer at Cotswold Fayre commented, "in these unprecedented times we have seen a rise in egg consumption, as consumers have gone back to basics. Eggs are a staple product, but our retail customers are still looking for authenticity and quality. St Ewe eggs offer a premium range to the market, achieving a point of difference. It will be exciting to see this range grow as they bring something fresh to the category."

### **Point of difference**

Enriched eggs create a point of difference, particularly if a package of ingredients is included. However, the benefits need to be communicated to consumers clearly, simply and honestly. It is also important to remember that for the public hen welfare is a bigger driver than any enrichment. So, supporting the claims is important whilst the benefits of free-range egg production still need to be highlighted for any enriched brand.

These are things St Ewe have learnt over time whilst developing their Super Eggs. "This next generation of free-range egg is a reaction to the current situation as well as continued focus on nutrition and hen welfare. We have also targeted our messaging to sectors of the population that would particularly benefit from both increasing their egg consumption and the nutritional benefits therein." This is

backed up strong scientific evidence, with the Food Standards Authority (FSA) now stating that runny or even raw eggs can now be eaten safely by vulnerable groups such as babies, pregnant women and the elderly.

Rebecca reiterated that enriched eggs are not cheap to produce but that customers are getting a premium product. "We talk about the fact that you don't lose any goodness from the eggs when cooking – you can make anything from an omelette to a cake and still receive the DHA and selenium your body needs. This is in comparison with selenium sources like broccoli, where much of it is lost when it is cooked. A serving of two Super Eggs provides you with 75% of the reference intake of selenium and 65% of DHA Omega-3."

St Ewe also provides clear and concise information about the benefits of selenium, DHA Omega-3 and vitamin D on their website, along with information about their egg production and egg recipes. "It is a challenge to pass on information to the consumer via the product packaging as we have such little space, so we use social media to highlight the benefits and direct people to our website." There are clear guidelines about claims that can be made for enriched eggs as for any other foodstuff. A declaration of what is in the egg provides clarity on the level of enrichment as well as many other sources of nutrition in eggs that are important for a healthy balanced diet.

### **Acknowledgement**

*Explore new ways eggs can be marketed to maintain a steady increase in egg consumption by Jamie McIntosh. October 2019. A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust report generously sponsored by The MacRobert Trust.*