

Could Hollista CollTech's 'unsexiest product ever' be a reformulation match made in heaven?

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14-Apr-2020 - Last updated on 14-Apr-2020 at 02:43 GMT



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Malaysia-based biotech firm Hollista CollTech has developed a new sugar formulation which is more intense, low-calorie and low-GI in hope of helping F&B companies reformulate products more effectively, especially in Singapore and Malaysia where government sugar reduction measures are in place.

The sugar formulation dubbed 80Less is a blend of general table sugar sucrose and intense sugarcane derived sweetener sucralose, making it five times sweeter and thus able to significantly reduce the sugar content in food and beverage products.

"80Less is basically the un-sexiest product ever, just a combination of sugar and intense sweetener to give five times more sweetness – but this product enables food and beverage manufacturers to make claims such as low-sugar, low-carbohydrate, low-calories and so on," Hollista CollTech Founder and CEO Dr Rajen Manicka told *FoodNavigator-Asia*.

"Importantly, because sucralose is essentially also a type of sugar and both molecules are similar, and our proprietary technology means the entire structure stays stable for up to five years, keeping a product sweet for a longer shelf life.

"This differs when other sweeteners like stevia are used together with sugar, as these are different molecules and tend to separate when the environment changes. 80Less remains stable even if mechanically blended, mixed with high acidity/alkalinity products, or at extreme temperatures i.e. boiling water is added to it."

Holista CollTech has just entered a five-year supply agreement with Malaysia's Rex Industry Berhad (Rex) to provide 80Less for the latter's range of eight tetra packed teas.

"When Malaysia implemented a [sugar tax](#) last year, Rex's drink range contained above 10% of sugar which meant that it needed to be taxed – 80Less helped to bring this sugar content down to 4.99%, out of the taxable range," Dr Manicka said.

"80Less can be used to directly replace sugar without any sort of trade-off in sensory applications or taste. This is very important to consumers, and we spent seven months getting the flavour profiles exactly the same as before and have tested this in schools to make sure it is the same."

All eight of Rex's teas now use 80Less, and under the agreement both firms have signed, Holista CollTech will provide Rex with RM4mn (US\$906,000) for the first year, after which 5% of year-on-year growth is expected.

The teas are currently also retailing in Singapore, which also introduced sugar reduction measures for the country earlier this year in the form of [colour-coded labelling](#) for all sugar-sweetened beverages.

Going even less sweet

Holista CollTech is looking to bring 80Less even further beyond this region by developing an even higher-intensity version of its product.

"In the US, 0.5g sugar per 100mL is the standard for sugar-free, and we want to hit that," said Dr Manicka.

"We're already at 4.99 now – we just need to go down by 10 times, which I am confident we can, and being able to be labelled sugar-free there would be really big."

Apart from using this in packaged beverages, he told us that they are also looking at using 80Less in other finished products such as solid foods, 3-in-1 coffees, cordial juices, condensed milks, solid foods and more.

Other NPDP

In addition, Holista CollTech is known for having developed a range of [low-GI flatbreads](#) together with Kawan Foods, and is looking to expand its low-GI technology far beyond this area.

"Just about all foods on the shelves today have more sugar in them than they should," said Dr Manicka.

"We are looking at developing various other low-GI products, such as tortillas which are garnering much interest from the China market as Mexican food is on the rise there, as well as low-GI ice creams and yoghurts."

He added that some of the biggest trends governing the F&B market today are natural and low-carbohydrate, and that consumers are willing to pay more for this, especially millennials.

"Sustainability is also a big thing, and meat-free is also growing quickly. We're also looking at proteins to support this such as pea protein and legume protein, which are low-GI as well."