

Omega-3 goes condition-specific

28/03/2006 - **The omega-3 market is one of the biggest trends in the supplement market today, but it seems it is crossing from general wellness towards products aimed at specific consumers and indications.**

Gunilla Traberg, marketing manager for Norwegian oil supplier [EPAX](#), told NutraIngredients.com that her company is moving away from oil with the traditional DHA:EPA ratio of 18:12, and is instead going into higher concentrations.

EPAX's offering now ranges from EPAX 1050 TG, with 60mg/g EPA and 430mg/g DHA, to EPAX 6015 TG and EE, with 530mg/g EPA and 100mg/g DHA.

The two areas in which [omega-3](#) has amassed the greatest volume of research in recent times are heart health and cognitive function.

In the case of the latter, the children's omega-3 supplements are already commonplace, with established products such as eyeq from Equazen Nutraceuticals, which was first introduced in 1997.

And EPAX is not the only supplier tweaking its ratios to better cater to the demands of formulators who are tracking consumer trends.

Last week [Ocean Nutrition](#) Canada announced a high DHA oil under its Meg-3 brand with a 5:1 ratio of DHA:EPA, for the formulation of products aimed at young mothers concerned about their infant's and their own nutrition.

Heart health is somewhat trickier due to health claims issues, but in the US the FDA approved a health claim linking EPA and DHA in supplements as well as foods to heart health in September 2004. This is believed to have been a major factor contributing to an influx of omega-3 containing products on the US market.

The evolution of catch-all omega-3 supplements into specific categories is not a unique trend in the supplements market, however.

It has already been seen in multivitamins, where the market has blossomed into age- and condition-related products which may also contain added ingredients like lutein for eye health, or folic acid for women of child-bearing age.

The difference is, however, that in multivitamins the diversification was borne out of a mature market, in which supplement makers faced a pressing need to differentiate.

Omega-3, on the other hand, is only beginning. The omega-3 market is forecast by Frost & Sullivan to grow at rates of 8 per cent on average to 2010.

In an age when consumers receive a daily dose of science with their morning news, formulators may be wise to keep one eye on the peer reviewed journals, and the other on the newspapers.