

Taking the pulse

Growth in vegan and vegetarian diets has led to substantial growth in interest for protein packed, affordable and earth-friendly superfoods, such as chickpeas, beans, lentils and beans. But how can manufacturers add value and keep on stimulating growth?

Pulses are part of the plant family known as legumes, with the word pulse applying only to the dried seed – the most common of these being edible beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas. Naturally gluten free and high in fibre, demand has not surprisingly risen considerably over the last few years.

As Jennifer Bond said in the 'Vegetables and Pulses Outlook' in 2016: "US pulse production gains have benefited not only from increased domestic consumption but also from generally rising growth in volume exports. For 2011-12, combined pulses exports were estimated at about 1.78 billion pounds; for 2016/17, exports are projected to reach 2.79 billion pounds and to account for about 43% of total production."

Following a shortfall in Indian lentil production, dubbed the dal crisis, US farmers expanded 2015/16 lentil production by 53% over the previous year. In combination with low wheat prices and maintained export and domestic prospects, farmers here are projected to increase lentil production for 2016/17 by a full 120% over the 2015/16 estimate. In Europe, the

recently named 'hummus crisis' developed after metallic taste issues led to various supermarket recalls but the tubs are now back on shelf and selling well, with more unusual Moroccan and capsicum variants adding interest to product ranges. Indicating the move to diversity and differentiation, celebrity chef, Theo Michaels recently developed a chick pea ice cream.

Meat alternative products

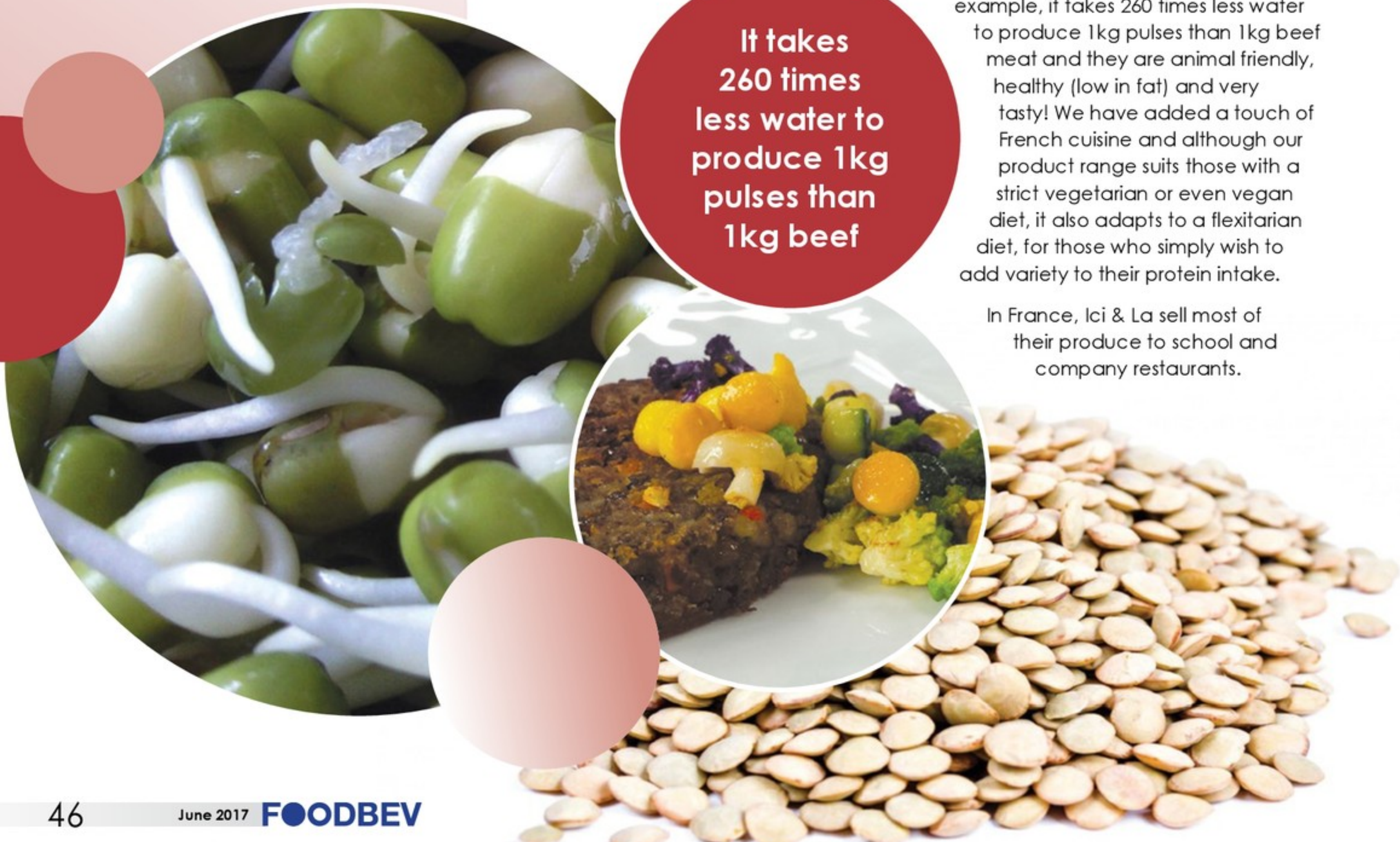
Pulses are easy to grow, demanding little in the way of water. Pulses enrich soils naturally with nitrogen, with the deep roots improving the soil structure. Today, crop rotation methods using pulses and cereals contribute to sound soils and are highly promoted in modern sustainable farming techniques.

ICI&LA commercial director Lionel Ravoux said: "We are a young start-up company and our philosophy is to propose tasty meat alternative products, made from pulses. It is common to see meat alternative products made from soy, but our idea is to develop a soy free product range of consensual meat alternative products,

that are environmentally friendly. For example, it takes 260 times less water to produce 1kg pulses than 1kg beef meat and they are animal friendly, healthy (low in fat) and very tasty! We have added a touch of French cuisine and although our product range suits those with a strict vegetarian or even vegan diet, it also adapts to a flexitarian diet, for those who simply wish to add variety to their protein intake.

In France, Ici & La sell most of their produce to school and company restaurants.

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Selling in bulk in 3kg and 4kg cartons the company works with major food service companies such as Elixor and Sodexo. Since last October the company has sold in organic chain stores such as Bio Coop, with its 400 outlets, selling 400g legume steaks and 300g packs of vegan balls.

A great many innovative new ready to eat foods are appearing on shelf. For instance, Easy Bean introduced its seaweed & sesame chickpea crispbread at the Natural Food Show this year. While BioNaturae, distributed by Sacla, showcased a new range of organic vegan foods based on mopur, an ingredient made with naturally-fermented organic wheat, chickpeas and olive oil. Its range of pure plant protein foods includes: deli slices, burgers, filled pasta and pasta sauce. Beendhi of France promoted its red lentil dal with coconut. Made with coconut, turmeric, cumin and curry leaves, this Pondicherry

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recipe just needs water added then simmering for 15 minutes. At the show, Cofresh Snack Foods also launched its first certified organic range of Eat Real lentil chips, hummus chips and veggie straws.

So plenty of progress to celebrate in this sector. Keep an eye on the product innovation pages of FoodBev Magazine to keep your finger on the pulse. ●



ADVERTORIAL

Enhancing the taste of fresh fish

With over 40 years' experience, Essentia Protein Solutions is the global leader in meat-based proteins for the food industry. Now the company has entered the seafood market with intensely flavoured, clean label, fish pastes and powders for savoury applications. Sourced in the waters around Scandinavia, Essentia's ProBase seafood range is made from 100% natural wild seafood raw materials including cod, mussels, plaice and lobster.

The collection includes tasty stock bases and fish meat extracts, to enhance a clean fish taste in stocks, stock cubes, bouillons, soups, sauces and ready meals, savoury mixes and blends, canned products, fish cakes, sticks and paté, fish balls, salads, dressings and snacks. Although targeted at premium and super premium savoury solutions, it may be economically feasible to use them in mainstream product categories where the intense flavour of the ProBase™ seafood range allows manufacturers to reduce recipe quantities.

Supplied as pastes and spray-dried powders, this additive free range can go into any application as a clean label ingredient or used to replace additives such as salt.

The latest product from Essentia Protein Solutions is a hydrolysed fish protein delivering excellent functionality to fish filets and fried fish products in shape of increased yield and improved tenderness.

For more information on creating premium and added value products, visit essentiaguide.com and register your profile to gain access to recipes providing solutions to your production needs. ●

