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HEALTHY FOODS and SNACKS

Manufacturing for a healthier future

A truly global enterprise

**Exclusive
interview:**
Kennedy's speaks to
Kenneth P. Manning,
head of Sensient
Technologies



FRUIT & NUT INGREDIENTS

Making the healthy
option more appealing



TRANS FAT ALTERNATIVES

Coating combines
indulgence with health



EQUIPMENT

Turning down the heat
on sugar-free confectionery





A truly global enterprise

Sensient Technologies is a global enterprise involved in the development, production and marketing of colourants and flavourings. *Kenneth Manning*, CEO, spoke to *Suzanne Callander* about the global trend towards the use of more natural and healthy ingredients, and the key role being played by Sensient in the development of such products

With 60% of its sales now outside the US, and 70 plants in 30 countries across the globe, Sensient Technologies rightly considers itself to be a global enterprise. Sensient is a producer of flavours, colours and fragrances and, today, it is one of the largest flavouring and the colouring businesses in the world.

Kenneth Manning, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Sensient, was keen to discuss the company's growing international business prospects, when I spoke to him recently. "We are in the process of expanding our distribution system, and are looking to set up blending facilities in Eastern Europe to allow us to offer the best possible customer support in this growing business region," he told me. "I am also expecting strong opportunities for Sensient in the Middle East and Brazil. So, we are planning to extend our distribution and customer support capabilities in these regions too."

Our conversation naturally soon moved on to the growing international trend towards more healthy foods and snacks. I wanted to know how this has impacted on Sensient's colour and flavour offerings for the confectionery and snacks market. Manning was enthusiastic in his reply. "There is a growing demand for good natural colours and flavours across the globe, but we have noticed an especially high demand for

more natural colours," he said. "This is good news for Sensient. Natural flavours have always been popular, but in the past five years demand for natural colours has overtaken that for synthetics."

Of particular interest to the company are developing areas such as Poland and the Balkan regions, where there is a high demand for natural colours too. This really highlights the global importance of the trend towards natural ingredients. "The trend towards more healthy eating is here to stay," predicts Manning. "Although it is being driven by the industrialised nations, such as the US and Japan (where, incidentally, Manning told me that there is hardly any market for synthetic colours any more!) there is a distinct increase in demand for more natural ingredients worldwide," as Sensient's experiences with customers from Poland and the Balkans demonstrate.

The confectionery industry is a very strong market area for Sensient, and is following the general trend towards the use of natural ingredients. "We have also noticed a shift towards demand for Organic certified ingredients too – another area in which we excel and for which we can supply a good range of high quality Organic certified flavours."

Research and development strategies

We moved on to discuss the company's research and development strategy. "The genesis of most of our R&D work is based on customer demand," said Manning. "We work closely with our customers to develop the perfect product for their needs. Because most products are customised for a particular application we are in a good position to identify emerging new trends and react accordingly."

Premium products

Of course, natural ingredients come at a premium when compared to synthetic offerings. However, Manning does not believe that this is an issue. "The cost of the flavouring and colouring is such a small part of the overall cost when developing a new product that it will not usually affect a company's choice of ingredients," he said. "Also, a product containing natural, or even Organic certified flavours and colours, will usually be sold at a premium too."

The use of natural colours also allows companies to add specific health benefits to their food offerings. Many companies, such as Coca Cola, are adding nutrients to their product offerings to meet consumer health demands. "Tea extracts, for example, are a particularly exciting prospect at the moment," said Manning. Sensient is continually looking at the potential health benefits of such raw ingredients.

Manning was also very positive, on the subject of regulatory requirements. "Everybody has the right to a safe product," he told me. "Regulations help food producers to ensure that consumers are protected. Regulations do change and we need to be able to adjust quickly to them. However, they ensure that inferior products are kept out of the marketplace, and should be considered to be a good thing for everyone concerned."



Today, consumers expect more healthy and natural flavours and colours in the food that they purchase



Because most of its products are customised for particular application requirements, R&D is a very important part of Sensient's business offering

Sensient through the years

Sensient Technologies Corporation is now a global manufacturer of colours, flavours and fragrances, with subsidiaries in more than 30 countries. However, it started out its life very differently – 126 years ago – as a gin distiller in Milwaukee in the US. It was then called Meadow Springs Distillery. Later, it changed direction to yeast production and also moved into other commodity businesses, such as frozen potatoes and cheese.

The company undertook something of a reinvention around 12 years ago, when Manning was appointed to the position of CEO. At this time the majority of the company's business activities took place in the US. Manning oversaw the sale of the company's commodity product businesses and the refocusing of efforts on more technology driven businesses.

The Sensient name came into being in 2000 (previously it was known as Universal Foods). The new name translates well into all languages, and incorporates three words which sum up the company – Sensory, Ingredients, and Science.

In conclusion, Manning believes that the trend towards more healthy foods will continue. "Consumers are now looking for more healthy options that do not compromise on taste or flavour. Different cooking methods are also finding favour with baked goods gaining popularity," he said. "Today, we are a global company, employing advanced facilities around the world to develop specialty food and beverage systems for major international customers to help them meet consumer demand. We want to continue to develop new products to meet current and future trends and want to continue to extend and strengthen our distribution system to serve all of our customers. For Sensient, globalisation means having the ability to service our customers wherever they are in the world."

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