

Global Whey Protein Market 2026

Market size, segmentation, competitive landscape and outlook

2021-2031

Moving forward, together



Every one of us has, at some point, heard the line from *Alice in Wonderland*: “It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast.” Cliché as the quote has become, our world is changing at extraordinary speed. And yet, to my mind, it matters not only to run fast, but — more importantly — to know where you are running.

We see ourselves as the navigator, ready at the right moment to point out the correct course. By providing current, timely information for the decisions that matter, we aim to protect our clients from missteps and to help them find new opportunities.

It matters to us that you are satisfied with the work we have done. If you have any questions about this report, we will be glad to answer them.

ANDREY SHEVCHENKO, Managing Partner

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Market at a glance

This demo shows the **form and depth** of the report — real narrative with the detailed figures and tables masked as “XXX”. When you order the report, every figure is finalised and verified for your copy, and the full report is delivered within 24–72 hours.

Indicator	Value
Market size (2025)	USD 12.2 bn
Forecast (2031)	USD 20.3 bn
CAGR (2021-2031)	8.9%
Study period	2021-2031
Largest region	North America · 37.2%
Fastest-growing region	Asia-Pacific · 10.7%
Market concentration	Moderate
Licence	Individual / Company

The global whey protein market reached USD XXX billion in 2025 and will expand to USD XXX billion by 2031, advancing at an XX% CAGR. Demand is broadening from sports nutrition into healthy-ageing products, clinical nutrition, fortified foods, high-protein dairy and convenient beverages. Whey protein concentrate remains the largest product class, while isolates and hydrolysates capture the strongest value growth through superior purity, solubility and application performance. North America leads the market, and Asia-Pacific is the fastest-growing region as urban consumers increase expenditure on active nutrition and protein-fortified foods.

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Executive summary

The global whey protein market reached USD XXX billion in 2025 and will expand to USD XXX billion by 2031, advancing at an XX% CAGR. Demand is broadening from sports nutrition into healthy-ageing products, clinical nutrition, fortified foods, high-protein dairy and convenient beverages. Whey protein concentrate remains the largest product class, while isolates and hydrolysates capture the strongest value growth through superior purity, solubility and application performance. North America leads the market, and Asia-Pacific is the fastest-growing region as urban consumers increase expenditure on active nutrition and protein-fortified foods.

Indicator	Value
Market size 2025	XXX
Forecast 2031	XXX
CAGR	XXX
Largest region	XXX
Fastest region	XXX

Key findings

- Global whey protein revenue reached USD XXX billion in 2025 and is forecast to reach USD XXX billion in 2031.
- Market volume totalled XXX tonnes in 2025 and will rise to XXX tonnes by 2031.
- Whey protein concentrate accounted for XX% of 2025 market value, supported by its cost-functionality balance across powders, bars and fortified foods.
- Sports and performance nutrition represented XX% of market value in 2025, while medical and healthy-ageing nutrition recorded the fastest application CAGR at XX%.
- North America held XX% of global revenue in 2025; Asia-Pacific will expand at a XX% CAGR through 2031.
- The European Union produced XXX tonnes of whey in liquid-whey equivalent and XXX tonnes of cheese in 2024, according to Eurostat.
- US low-protein whey exports reached XXX tonnes in 2024, including XXX tonnes shipped to Southeast Asia, according to the US Dairy Export Council.
- The American Dairy Products Institute standard defines whey protein isolate as containing at least XX% protein on a dry-matter basis.

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Market size and forecast

Market value by year, USD bn

Indicator	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	CAGR
Market value, USD bn	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Market volume	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Production	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Imports	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Exports	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Apparent consumption	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

Year-over-year value change

Indicator	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	CAGR
Market value	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%
Production	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%
Imports	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%
Exports	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%	X%

Source: XXX

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Global Whey Protein Market Trends and Growth Drivers

Whey protein economics are shaped by two connected markets: cheese production determines the underlying whey pool, while nutrition demand determines how much value processors can extract from it. The most profitable assets are those able to direct whey toward WPC80, WPI, hydrolysates and specialised fractions without compromising consistency or sensory quality.

Demand has become structurally broader. Performance nutrition remains the largest outlet, but healthy ageing, weight management, convenient meal replacement and high-protein mainstream foods now influence capacity decisions. This expansion rewards ingredients that combine amino-acid quality with neutral flavour, rapid dispersion and stability under acidic or thermal processing.

The principal near-term tension is the gap between demand for high-protein whey and the time required to commission filtration and drying assets. Elevated input costs pressure downstream brands, yet they also strengthen the case for whey-stream acquisitions, long-term supply contracts, formulation efficiency and premium applications capable of absorbing higher ingredient prices.

Growth drivers

Protein moves into everyday nutrition

Protein positioning has expanded from specialist bodybuilding products into breakfast, snacking, hydration and weight-management occasions. Whey benefits from a complete amino-acid profile, established consumer recognition and formulation versatility across powders, bars, yoghurts and ready-to-drink products.

Healthy ageing accelerates premium demand

Ageing populations and greater attention to muscle maintenance are lifting demand for leucine-rich, digestible proteins in senior and medical nutrition. Isolates and hydrolysates gain disproportionately because manufacturers require high protein density, low lactose and predictable digestion.

Clear whey opens new beverage occasions

Acid-stable isolates allow brands to formulate transparent, juice-like drinks that sit outside the traditional milky shake occasion. The format expands usage into hydration, daytime refreshment and lower-calorie wellness, strengthening value per kilogram for highly soluble WPI.

Emerging-market sports nutrition scales

Gym participation, organised sport, social-commerce discovery and rising disposable income are increasing protein-supplement penetration in India, China, Southeast Asia and Latin America. Sachets, smaller tubs and local flavours reduce trial barriers and broaden the category beyond affluent urban athletes.

Food manufacturers intensify fortification

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Dairy, bakery, snack and meal-replacement producers are using whey to raise protein claims while supporting texture, emulsification and water binding. Application-specific concentrates improve processing reliability and allow whey suppliers to participate in larger mainstream food categories.

Processing technology raises whey value

Membrane filtration, ion exchange, fractionation and improved drying systems convert variable whey streams into higher-purity ingredients with better taste and dispersibility. These investments expand recoverable value from existing cheese networks and support specialised proteins for clinical and early-life nutrition.

Restraints

High-protein whey supply remains tight

WPI and WPC80 capacity depends on suitable whey streams, filtration assets and drying infrastructure rather than milk supply alone. Strong demand and lengthy capacity lead times raise procurement costs for sports-nutrition brands and can delay product launches or force reformulation.

Alternative proteins intensify substitution

Pea, soy, egg, casein and emerging fermentation-derived proteins compete for formulations where vegan positioning, price stability or slow digestion carries more weight than whey’s rapid absorption. Blended-protein products also reduce whey inclusion rates in value-oriented applications.

Dairy tolerance narrows the consumer pool

Milk-allergen requirements, lactose sensitivity and vegan preferences exclude whey from part of the nutrition market. Low-lactose isolates address digestive concerns, but brands still face consumer confusion between lactose-free, dairy-free and milk-allergen claims.

Regulatory complexity slows specialised products

Health claims, amino-acid fortification, infant-formula specifications and novel processing requirements vary materially by jurisdiction. Compliance testing and registration extend time to market for hydrolysates, paediatric formulations and products making muscle or recovery claims.

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Whey Protein Market Driver and Restraint Impact on the Forecast

Drivers — impact on forecast

Driver	Impact on CAGR	Geography	Horizon
Protein moves into everyday nutrition	XXX	XXX	XXX
Healthy ageing accelerates premium demand	XXX	XXX	XXX
Clear whey opens new beverage occasions	XXX	XXX	XXX
Emerging-market sports nutrition scales	XXX	XXX	XXX
Food manufacturers intensify fortification	XXX	XXX	XXX
Processing technology raises whey value	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

Restraints — impact on forecast

Restraint	Impact on CAGR	Geography	Horizon
High-protein whey supply remains tight	XXX	XXX	XXX
Alternative proteins intensify substitution	XXX	XXX	XXX
Dairy tolerance narrows the consumer pool	XXX	XXX	XXX
Regulatory complexity slows specialised products	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

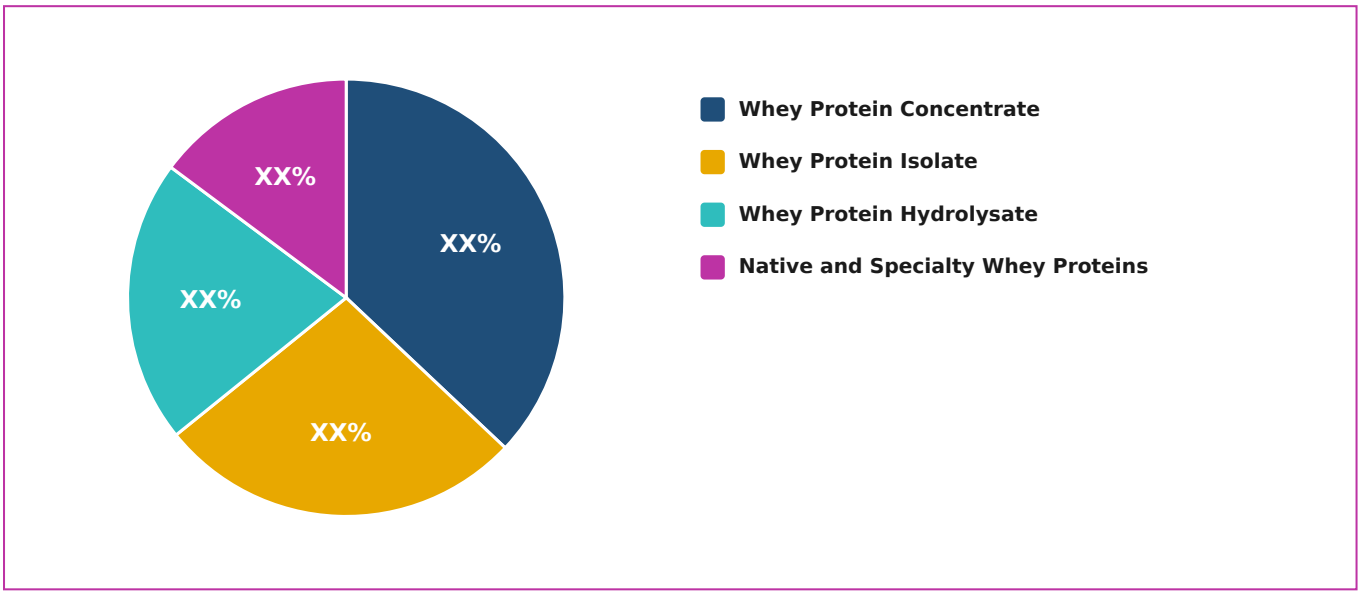
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Whey Protein Market Segmentation Analysis

By Product Type

WPC retains the largest share because grades from WPC35 to WPC80 span economical food fortification and premium sports nutrition. WPI gains where formulators require at least XX% protein, low lactose and clean beverage performance. Hydrolysates command the fastest growth in medical, infant and rapid-digestion products, while native and fractionated proteins occupy a smaller premium tier.

Value share by product Type, 2025



Source: XXX

Value by product Type, USD bn

Segment	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Share 2025	CAGR
Whey Protein Concentrate	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Whey Protein Isolate	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Whey Protein Hydrolysate	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Native and Specialty Whey Proteins	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

By Form

Powders dominate international trade and formulation because they provide long shelf life, high solids and flexible dosing. Liquid concentrates reduce drying requirements and support efficient regional supply to beverage and dairy plants, but transport economics constrain their trading radius. Improved agglomeration and instantisation continue to enhance powder dispersibility in consumer applications.

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Value by form, USD bn

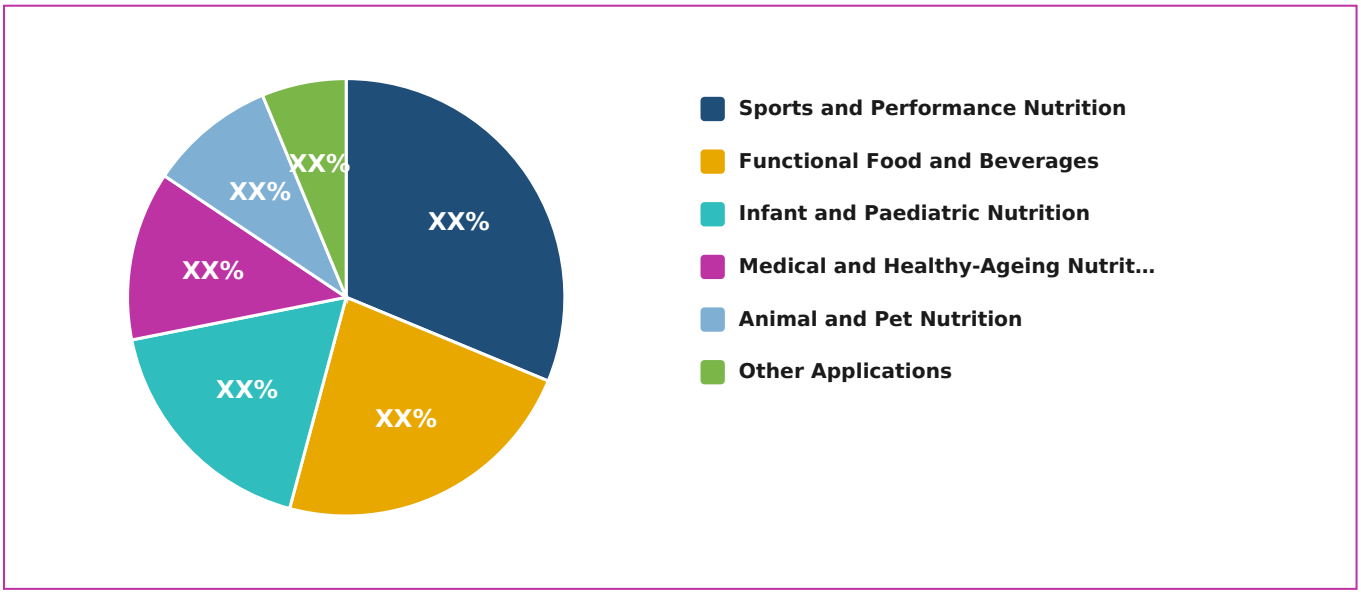
Segment	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Share 2025	CAGR
Powder	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Liquid and Concentrated Liquid	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

By Application

Sports nutrition remains the commercial centre of whey demand through powders, bars and ready-to-drink products. Functional foods and beverages are taking a larger share as protein claims spread into yoghurt, snacks, bakery and hydration. Medical and healthy-ageing nutrition delivers the fastest expansion because protein density, digestibility and amino-acid quality are central formulation requirements.

Value share by application, 2025



Source: XXX

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Value by application, USD bn

Segment	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Share 2025	CAGR
Sports and Performance Nutrition	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Functional Food and Beverages	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Infant and Paediatric Nutrition	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Medical and Healthy-Ageing Nutrition	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Animal and Pet Nutrition	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Other Applications	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

By Route to Market

Ingredient contracts dominate because major nutrition, dairy and food manufacturers source whey in industrial volumes with tailored quality specifications. Consumer retail and e-commerce generate higher unit values through branded powders and convenient formats. Marketplaces, subscriptions and social commerce are accelerating direct access in India, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Value by route to Market, USD bn

Segment	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Share 2025	CAGR
Business-to-Business Ingredients	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Consumer Retail and E-commerce	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

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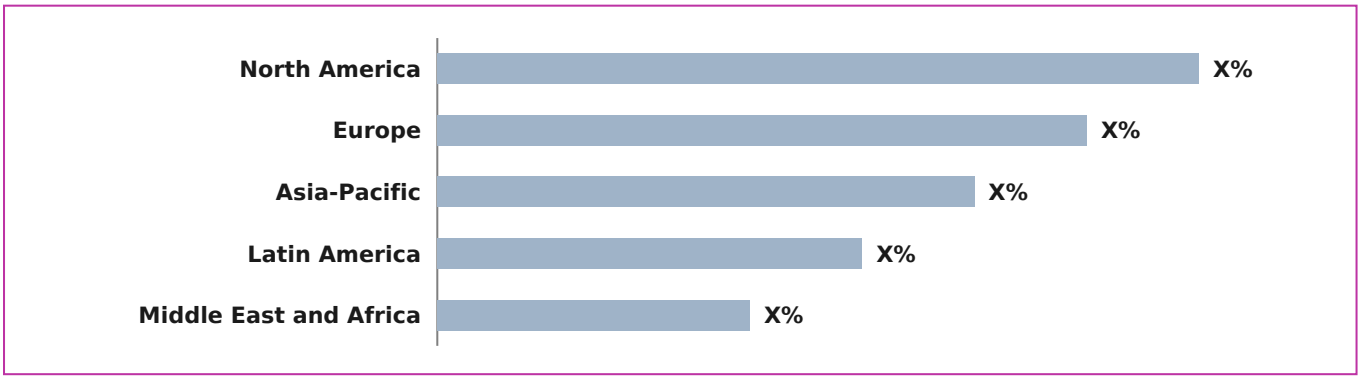
Whey Protein Market Regional Analysis and Country Outlook

North America generated XX% of global whey protein revenue in 2025. The United States combines a large cheese and whey-processing base with deep penetration of sports supplements, protein bars and ready-to-drink nutrition. High-protein whey prices and capacity utilisation are encouraging investment in WPI, WPC80 and instantised formats, while Canada contributes a smaller but premium-oriented market centred on active nutrition and functional foods.

Europe represented XX% of 2025 value and remains a critical production and technology centre. Eurostat recorded XXX tonnes of EU whey in liquid-whey equivalent and XXX tonnes of cheese in 2024, providing a substantial raw-material platform. Germany, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom support advanced ingredient manufacturing, with current investment focused on whey valorisation, energy efficiency and premium proteins.

Asia-Pacific will grow at XX% annually through 2031, led by China, India, Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia. China combines sports-nutrition demand with major infant and specialised-nutrition applications; India is scaling through e-commerce, gym culture and affordable pack sizes; Japan and South Korea favour clinically supported healthy-ageing products. Australia and New Zealand remain strategically important exporters and innovation centres rather than only end markets.

Growth rate by region, 2025-2031



Source: XXX

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Market value by region, USD bn

Region	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	Share 2025	CAGR
North America	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Europe	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Asia-Pacific	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Latin America	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Middle East and Africa	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

Market value by leading country, USD bn

Country	2025	2031	Share 2025	CAGR
United States	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Germany	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
United Kingdom	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Belgium	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Netherlands	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Japan	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
China	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Mexico	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

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Whey Protein Market Competitive Landscape and Company Share

The whey protein market is moderately concentrated: the ten largest suppliers represented XX% of 2025 revenue. Scale advantages originate in access to cheese whey, membrane and drying capacity, quality systems and global technical-sales coverage. Glanbia, Arla Foods Ingredients, Fonterra, FrieslandCampina, Lactalis Ingredients and Hilmar Ingredients compete across multiple regions, while Carbery, Agropur, Milk Specialties Global and Grande Custom Ingredients hold strong product or geographic positions.

Capacity ownership is becoming more strategic as high-protein whey demand outpaces additions to suitable processing infrastructure. Arla Foods Ingredients added Volac Whey Nutrition's WPI-focused Felinfach operation, while FrieslandCampina acquired Wisconsin Whey Protein and committed more than EUR XXX to high-value whey investments in the Netherlands. These moves strengthen control over scarce WPI and WPC80 supply and shorten the route from cheese whey to specialised nutrition customers.

Competition is shifting from protein percentage alone toward sensory performance, instantisation, heat and acid stability, traceability, low-lactose specifications and formulation support. Suppliers are developing clear protein drinks, soft-texture bars, high-protein dairy and medical-nutrition systems, while branded nutrition companies use flavour innovation, athlete partnerships, digital distribution and smaller serving formats to defend consumer loyalty.

Leading companies

Company	HQ	Est. revenue 2025	Market share 2025	YoY
Glanbia plc	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Arla Foods Ingredients Group P/S	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Royal FrieslandCampina N.V.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Lactalis Ingredients	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Leprino Foods Company	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Agropur Cooperative	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Carbery Group Ltd.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Milk Specialties Global	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: XXX

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Whey Protein Market Forecast and Commercial Opportunities

The market will add USD XXX billion between 2025 and 2031. Base-case growth assumes continued protein mainstreaming, steady cheese-derived whey availability and phased commissioning of new filtration capacity. WPI, hydrolysates and native whey will outgrow the market as clear beverages, healthy-ageing products and specialised nutrition take a larger share of industry value.

An upside scenario emerges if medical nutrition reimbursement broadens, GLP-1 weight-management users adopt protein-preservation regimens at scale and new capacity reduces WPI bottlenecks without collapsing producer returns. A downside scenario centres on prolonged raw-material inflation, weaker discretionary supplement spending and faster substitution by blended or plant proteins in cost-sensitive applications.

Commercial winners will secure whey streams, maintain consistent sensory quality and translate technical performance into customer-ready applications. Regional affordability will matter as much as purity: premium isolates will lead value growth, but cost-efficient concentrates, sachets and locally formulated products will drive the broadest user expansion in emerging markets.

Opportunities

- High-leucine products for healthy ageing and sarcopenia-focused nutrition
- Clear, acidic and carbonated protein beverages
- Affordable single-serve products for India, Southeast Asia and Latin America
- Hydrolysed proteins for clinical and specialised paediatric nutrition
- Low-lactose and digestive-comfort formulations
- Traceable, lower-carbon whey ingredients
- Protein fortification of yoghurt, bakery, snacks and meal replacements

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