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## Protein and Plastics in Hand, FRS Heads for Convenience

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While the still-patchouli-and-granola scented Natural Foods Expo West show might seem an odd place for performance beverage company FRS to pull back the curtain on a new set of convenience channel-focused products – in PET plastic, no less – the company's new marketing chief just can't hold back.



New PET -- Ready for the Grab and Go

"Where we are in our life cycle is about getting our message out about who we are, and about scaling our business," said Deepak Masand, who signed on as the VP of marketing at FRS just a few months ago. Expo West was "the first thing on the screen from a timing point of view," he added.

Certainly, the company's message is accelerating with the launch of the PET products. They represent large steps being taken by a company that just last year inked a deal to be co-distributed by PepsiCo through its direct-to-warehouse division, the same one that services Gatorade.

And while FRS is strongly science-driven — the company's new messaging centers around four words, "The Amazing Human Body" — the new bottled line, which even features FRS' first pair of protein-focused SKUs, might not seem so out of place at a natural foods show after all. Whole fruit graphics play a prominent role in the full-wrap label and stronger fruit flavors improving the taste of the tough-to-downplay ingredients like quercetin and protein.

Masand points to the protein flavors as a key part of the brand's expansion. With protein drinks growing as a class, including new offerings from fellow Pepsi brand Gatorade and Pepsi-aligned Muscle Milk, he said that the new orange cream and Blackberry Acai flavors, each of which carry 25 grams of protein and 7 grams of fiber, represent a new way to get FRS into the hands of consumers.

"We're not about trying to split the protein pie," he said. "Our idea is to use protein to bring people into the FRS product segment."

The protein is one of three new steps the brand will be taking toward consumers in the not-too-distant future, Masand added. FRS has been focused on "Healthy Energy" as its key branding point to date, he said, but to expand the notion of it being a performance-oriented healthy beverage "Healthy Protein" is just a short distance away. Beyond that, he said, are two more steps, although "it's fair to say it will be on the performance continuum, and the quercetin will be a part of all of our products. You will see us staying very close to our knitting with the amazing human body."

One performance-enhancer soon to leave the entire line, however, is caffeine. According to Masand, FRS is in the midst of dropping the stimulant from all of its SKUs. The company's other three new bottled products, under its original Healthy Energy line, are all geared toward grab-and-go as well, however, and even minus the stimulant, Masand is hoping they'll move quickly. The former Visa and PepsiCo marketer – Masand helped launch Sierra Mist – says that working with an entrepreneurial brand like FRS has him extremely focused and energized due to its highly-disciplined use of resources.

"What's really fun about it is a two-part story we're telling," he said. "First, the FRS brand story, and second, the product story – the quercetin story. There is real science, but people get afraid when you make it too scientific."