Global Cellulose Ether Market Assessment, By Type [Methyl Cellulose and Derivatives, Carboxymethyl Cellulose, Hydroxyethyl Cellulose, Hydroxypropyl Cellulose, Ethyl Cellulose], By Application [Construction, Pharmaceutical, Food and Beverages, Personal Care, Others], By Region, Opportunities and Forecast, 2018-2032F

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Report description:

Global cellulose ether market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6.92% during the forecast period 2025-2032. The market size will grow from USD 8.34 billion in 2024 to USD 14.24 billion in 2032. Demand of cellulose ether is increasing due to the demand from various industries. The major contributing factor for the rising demand is the construction industry, where it proves to be vital additives for the products such as dry-mix mortars, adhesives and cement products. It facilitates water retention, workability, and adhesion, enhancing building material performance and durability, driven by residential and commercial construction development. It also acts as binders, disintegrants, and controlled-release agents in the pharmaceutical sector, in line with increasing interests in complex drug delivery systems.

The market's growing interest in sustainability and tightening environmental regulations are driving an increase in demand for bio-based cellulose ether. Sustainable production and sourcing practices are being sought and undertaken by producers.

In October 2023, Ashland Global Holdings Inc. introduced a product "Culminal Gap", a modified methyl cellulose derivative, which is a high performing cellulose ether for premium cement adhesives. Furthermore, the Asia-Pacific region, with its growing industrial base and construction activity, is focusing on R&D and capacity expansion to capitalize on local demand increases and capitalize on the region's development prospects.

Increased Demand from the Pharmaceuticals Industry

The pharmaceutical sector is one of the biggest contributors to the global cellulose ether market, and the compounds assume a significant role in their applications. Cellulose ethers are widely employed as pharmaceutical excipients as binders, disintegrants, and thickening agents. Their ability to increase the stability, bioavailability, and controlled release of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) makes them of immense value in modern pharmaceutical formulation. As demand for advanced drug delivery systems grows, particularly for intricate products such as sustained release and targeted therapies, high-end cellulose ethers are in greater demand. The materials improve tablet, capsule, and liquid oral form performance with consistent API distribution and enhanced release profiles. Additionally, the increasing chronic illnesses and aging population are propelling higher pharmaceutical usage, in turn driving demand for cellulose ethers. Additional moves towards customized medication and the formulation of new forms of drugs also require new excipients that can deliver under particular demands. With pharmaceutical companies investing more in research and development to formulate more effective therapies, cellulose ethers will remain an integral component in making these a reality, cementing their value to the industry.

For instance, in November 2024, Univar Solutions LLC announced to be the exclusive channel partner of SD Head USA LLC in pharmaceutical business. With this development, Univar Solutions LLC is set to enhance its pharmaceutical ingredients portfolio by incorporating a wide array of cellulose ethers and other excipient solutions.

Construction Sector is a Key Segment in Global Cellulose Ether Market

In application industries, construction sector is one of the key segments in the cellulose ether market. It is used as an additive in various applications. Due to its ability of adhesion, durability and workability and water adhesion capability it is extensively used in the cement and mortar formulation industries. They are also used in tile adhesives, grout, cementitious renders and cohesiveness in the construction industry. Furthermore, the increasing demand for the infrastructural development and energy-efficient consumption is increasing the demand of cellulose ether in the construction industry. With more urbanization across the globe and more infrastructure development, the demand for high-performance building materials is on the rise. Cellulose ethers contribute significantly to fulfilling this demand by enhancing the application properties of building mixtures. For instance, they avoid cracking upon drying and improve the general workability of mortars such that they are easier to apply. Additionally, increasing focus on sustainable building is driving the use of cellulose ethers. The products are typically derived from renewable resources, with the construction industry's focus on sustainable solutions in mind. With increasing regulations on environmental factors and sustainability in construction, cellulose ethers are a suitable option for manufacturers to address these requirements.

For instance, in June 2022, Nouryon Chemicals Holding B.V. introduced a new cellulose ether product under the name of Bermocoll FLOW cellulose ether. It provides an optimal balance of sag resistance, spatter resistance in the exterior and interior of decorative paints.

Market for Cellulose Ethers Sees Strong Demand from the Personal Care Market

The pressure for natural, renewable, high-functionality ingredients for cosmetic and personal care products is strongly propelling the market for the global cellulose ether. It is obtained from renewable wood and cotton pulp that has the ability to impart thickness, stabilization, binding, and film-forming ability, which can be beneficial to numerous different applications. The customers are going for products that are developed from natural and non-toxic ingredients, and thus demand has increased for cellulose ethers, and they have been employed as a substitute for synthetic polymers. The chemicals thicken products such as shampoos, creams, lotions, conditioners, and cosmetics and improve flavor and stability.

Companies are trying to meet such demands, and this is evident in growing and widening applications of cellulose ethers. Further, this is evident by growing number of personal care products that are marketed as "natural," "organic," or "eco-friendly" and that include cellulose ethers. The inherent properties of cellulose ethers, including good emulsification stabilization, viscosity control, and non-greasy, smooth texture, also increases its demand. With the market for personal care continually pushing new ground and with changing consumer culture, the demand for cellulose ethers will also continue to grow steadily, and cellulose ethers will emerge as a major commodity used in the manufacturing of safe, efficient, and eco-friendly personal care products. For instance, in May 2024, Cellugy ApS raised USD 5.14 Million for Ecoflexy dry cellulose. This funding will help in scaling up the production, deployment and commercialization of the product.

Asia-Pacific Dominates the Global Market

Demand of cellulose ether is rising rapidly in the Asia-Pacific region due to robust demand from construction, pharmaceuticals, food and beverages and others. With the growing infrastructural expansion in the countries such as China, India, Japan and South Korea. Also, with favorable government rules and regulations for promoting investment in manufacturing and production industry.

Furthermore, the market is expected to grow due to factors such as rapid urbanization, increasing industrialization and increasing population.
For instance, in April 2025, Brenntag Specialties partnered with Gaomi Silver Hawk for the distribution of high-performance cellulose ether in South Asia.
Future Market Scenario (2025 - 2032F)
- Growing pressure from environmental concerns and consumer preference for green products will continue to drive demand for cellulose ethers, which are made from renewable feedstocks like wood and cotton.
- Technological advancements in manufacturing processes will enhance the functionality of cellulose ethers to diversify them across industries such as construction, pharmaceuticals, and food processing.
- Increased industrialization and urbanization in the likes of Asia-Pacific, Latin America will provide new prospects for the application of cellulose ether in building materials, adhesives, and consumer goods.
- The shift towards green packaging due to environmental concerns is a huge opportunity for cellulose derivatives. They can be utilized to improve the performance of biodegradable packaging without sacrificing strength and integrity.
Key Players Landscape and Outlook
Major players in the cellulose ether industry are leveraging strategic growth and technology to compete. The players employ strong distribution networks, significant research and development capabilities, and strategic partnerships to boost market share. The majority of these market leaders are shifting to sustainability, with major investments toward making manufacturing more efficient and supply chain security in compliance with stringent environmental protection measures. Mergers and partnerships also significantly impact altering the market landscape through promoting innovation and greater global connectivity. Focus on sustainability trends determines industry standards and a culture that promotes creativity, efficiency, and the environment.
In December 2024, Shandong Head Group Co., Ltd., a leading producer of cellulose ethers, planned to invest USD 80 million in the United States production facility to improve service and supply chain efficiency for North American customers. The facility will produce over 20 billion Hydroxypropyl Methylcellulose (HPMC) capsules annually, meeting the growing demand for high-quality, vegetarian-friendly capsule solutions.

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