



The global market for functional foods is estimated to be \$57 billion in consumer sales, with an annual growth of approximately 10%. The two leading markets, U.S. and Europe, are nearly the same size, at \$18-19 billion each in sales. Within Europe, Germany, France and the U.K. are the leading nations with

development is to choose the right ingredients. Most of the compounds used to add functionality to foods are based on plant extracts or plant ingredients. From the many hundreds of plants with pharmacological or physiological activities, it is hard to select the right ingredients. The ingredients selected must be safe (hopefully having had some food use in the past) and well documented when it comes to dosages and effects on the human body. Additionally, there must be not restrictions on their use. Such documentation is now available in a recently published book called *Plant-Based Ingredients for Functional Foods* published by Leatherhead Food International, Surrey, U.K. This book covers the functional food market and the various strategies concerning international regulations. It also provides extensive documentation of over 340 plants describing their possible use in functional foods with regard to safety, claims substantiation and regulations.

Plant-Based Ingredients For Functional Foods

Functional foods present great opportunities through innovative ingredients and applications.

By Joerg Gruenwald

Joerg Gruenwald, Ph.D., is president of Phytopharm Consulting, Institute for Phytopharmaceuticals, a consulting company for herbal medicines and dietary supplements, specialized in international alliances, product and partner findings for new product development and regulatory advice worldwide. He is also the author of the PDR for Herbal Medicines. Dr. Gruenwald can be reached at Waldseeweg 6, D-13467 Berlin, Germany; 49-30 4000 8100, Fax.: 49-30-4000-8400; E-mail: jgruenwald@phytopharm.org; Website: www.phytonet.com.

\$2.7-4 billion in consumer sales, followed by Scandinavia, which has the highest per capita sales, Italy and then Switzerland.

The regulatory framework for functional foods, and particularly functional food claims, is being developed in the European Union (EU). It will take many more years before this situation will be cleared up, and in some way harmonized. Even though the European directives are binding, it will take months or years of discussion before they can be applied. At that point, they will be implemented by each individual member state through national laws, a situation, which may present a variety of results. This makes functional food development difficult at the moment. Despite this, however, all of the major food companies as well as many smaller food companies continue to come out with creative functional food products. Some of these products have strong functional claims, as companies try to determine how far they can push regulatory boundaries.

Developing a Functional Food Product
An important step in new product

Conclusion

The international growth rate of functional food products is, along with the organic category, the fastest growing segment in the food industry. It has great potential for the future, especially when the European regulations become harmonized, permitting appropriate claims to inform the consumer of the health benefits from using these products.

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