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BRIEF COMMUNICATION

Nutraceuticals

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INTRODUCTION

Nutraceuticals can be defined as “products isolated or purified from foods and generally sold in medicinal forms not usually associated with food, and have demonstrated physiological benefits or provides protection against chronic disease”.

Quite often nutraceuticals and functional foods are used in the same sentence and are deemed to be the same. Functional Foods can be defined as “foods that, by virtue of physiological active components, provide health benefits beyond basic nutrition”. Therefore nutraceuticals can more simply be defined as derivatives of foods often used as an ingredient, whereas functional foods are a food in their own right.

While nutraceuticals have been around for centuries being used extensively in traditional Chinese medicine, it is was only towards the end of the last century the rest of the world started to take notice. This interest has resulted from the links between diet and health, in fact nearly 90% of all shoppers believe in the connection between diet and health. As a consequence a multi billion-dollar industry has been established, primarily in North America and Europe to exploit this connection.

Perceived benefits

As the market place has developed a number of trends have also become apparent in terms of consumer needs and concerns, when making purchasing decisions. When considering what to purchase the following factors motivate the decision as to what to purchase.

Ensure overall good health	88%
Reduce fat intake	81%
Follow doctor's medical advice	73%
Reduce / control weight	73%
Reduce cholesterol	72%
Reduce risk of specific condition / illness	66%
Improve stamina / energy	64%
Manage / treat specific health condition	63%
Cope with food intolerance	48%
Manage stress	46%
Manage allergies	41%
Slow down aging	39%

Consumer health concerns recently surveyed in the USA

are,

Healthy eyesight	85%
Cancer	81%
Fatigue / Energy	75%
Heart Disease	75%
Joint Pain / Arthritis	73%
High Cholesterol	73%
Blood Pressure	69%
Stress	68%

To satisfy the demand driven by the above, there is a tremendous investment in science to find derivatives (nutraceuticals) to meet this demand through the provision of products throughout the world. Many of these products have their base within traditional Chinese medicine.

BioProducts

I would like to now refer to our experience within BioProducts (NZ) Ltd in terms of developing nutraceuticals to meet the needs of the Asian and North American market.

BioProducts is a relatively new Company being incorporated in 1996. It supplies nutraceuticals, manufactured to specific product formulations to the requirements of clients and their specific markets. These are currently derived from deer velvet antler, bone, venison and liver, using extraction technologies developed with and by the Game Industry Board. It is intended in the future to also supply nutraceuticals derived from plants.

Neways, a multilevel marketing Company based in Utah uses a velvet extract in their anti-aging product “BioGeivity”. Health Food Enterprises, based in Hong Kong uses a deer bone extract in their fatigue and stress product “Eagles Essence of Deer”.

Unfortunately, many of the claims made about the benefits of using products made up of nutraceuticals have been based upon anecdotal evidence. There is however a growing number of well known world athletes willing to testify as to the benefits of such products, together with growing scientific evidence (some of which has been produced within New Zealand) in support of these claims. This has resulted in significant scientific agreement among qualified experts. Tighter regulatory authority controls have also meant that such claims must be able to be substantiated to protect the consumer.

Such is the demand and acceptance by consumers in general for nutraceutical-based products that future trends may result in not just crops being harvested for their derivatives but intensively farmed animals not just being farmed for meat and skin but primarily for the extracts that can be derived from them.