

Europe Invests in Polysaccharides Immune-Health Research

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As part of the European Commission's [Seventh Framework Program](#), which supports research in the EU, the European Union is investing €6 million and 4.5 years in a research program to study the effects of polysaccharides on immune health. The project, called the [FibeBiotics Consortium](#), is a consortium of four European universities, five research institutions, and several private companies, which will study the effects of polysaccharides from food fibers on gut and immune function.

Among the polysaccharides to be studied is ingredient supplier Biothera's (Eagan, MN) [Wellmune WGP](#), a proprietary beta-glucan strain derived from baker's yeast, which has been clinically shown to safely prime key immune cells by activating neutrophils, the large population of immune cells in the body.

According to a FibeBiotics statement:

It is known for a long time that polysaccharides (other than easily digestible starch) and the immune system are connected. The immune response towards invading pathogens like bacteria, fungi, and yeast is often initiated by the recognition of the intruder via the sugar chains that are located on the outside of the pathogen. After this recognition, the immune system is activated and attempts to remove the pathogen as fast as possible.

Research indicated that some specific polysaccharides, for example those from the cell wall of yeast or those that are present in various plant products, can activate the immune system starting from the intestine, even when no intruders are present. Various polysaccharides have been shown to activate macrophages, which can 'digest' pathogens and unwanted cells. An activated, warned, or primed first layer of defense can help to improve the overall resistance of humans.