NUTRITION HORIZON

Research on Dietary Fibre and Health Recieves 6M Euros From EU

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Summary:The project known as 'FibeBiotics', is related to the development of functional food and ingredients for the European food industry, and is a collaboration between 5 European research institutes, 8 small and medium size enterprises of which two are Norwegian, and 4 European universities. Researchers from Nofima, Ås, have been key persons in setting up the project.

Feb 13 2012 --- A proper diet may contribute to strengthened immune function and make us healthier. The EU is now investing 6M Euros in an international project aimed to study the health effects of specific dietary fibres. Together with renowned European research institutes, universities and private enterprises, a research team at Nofima, Ås and two Norwegian companies are involved in development of future functional foods.

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The goal is to support the development of functional food ingredients and products that are beneficial for the human gut and immune function and therefore of crucial importance for quality of life.

The project will evaluate health effects of selected soluble dietary fibres consisting of polysaccharides (complex carbohydrates) with various potential health effects. The polysaccharide sources are extracts from cereals, apples, yeast and mushrooms. Their effect as part of a foodstuff is to be determined by measuring specific biomarkers in different models, and ultimately in humans. Study start was January 1 and it will last for 4 ½ years.

The study`s goal is to identify components and develop products that can strengthen the body`s defence against common infections such as cold and flu, and make use of EFSA supported biomarkers that enable immune function claims and underpin the mechanism of action involved. The studied mechanisms are the innate and adaptive immune system and the possible involvement of microbiota in the large intestine and microbiota-mediated products. To achieve this goal, new and existing non-digestable polysaccharides will be studied for their health effects in a systematic way by developing a toolbox of dedicated assays and models that can be used by industry and authorities to study and approve health ingredients with a similar health focus, says Dr. Scient. Svein Halvor Knutsen at Nofima, Norway. Knutsen is among the initiators of the FibeBiotics study. The project is coordinated by Wageningen UR – Food & Biobased Research.

In addition to Nofima, two Norwegian companies are key partners in the study; GA Analysis AS (GA) and Immitec Norway AS. GA will contribute with expertise in profiling the gut bacteria and correlating various bacterial profiles to different health conditions.

Immitec Norge AS contributes with their well documented and EFSA approved Novel Food compound Wellmune WGP, which is the active ingredient in ImmiFlex, ImmiMarine and ImmiNexin.

Our gut is an important part of the human immune system, and our diet can have a major impact on our defence against diseases. The research will study different dietary fibres based on non-digestable polysaccharides. Dietary fibres are primarily related to gut function, lowered cholesterol and reduced risk of cancer. However a growing body of research shows that fibres from yeast has a more common, positive effect on the immune system, and may therefore be of great importance to public health.