

NEWS FILE

The Voice of the Canadian Food & Beverage Industry

Funding Takes Functional Food Sector to a New Level

The Canadian government further recognized the contribution of food and natural health products to health when it announced this June that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Science and Innovation Broker Program would contribute \$712,000 towards a functional food/natural health product (FFNHP) sector development strategy.

The funds for this initiative are being provided to Nutri-Net Canada via the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA) acting as project administrator. Nutri-Net Canada is a coalition of organizations supported by provincial governments, non-government institutions and industry and trade associations, including the CHFA. Nutri-Net Canada has committed to completing the sector strategy by April 2008.

"It's an ambitious plan," says Ann Eastman, manager of Emerging Sectors with the Trade and Intergovernmental Relations Branch of the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Eastman adds that it's already an achievement that

public and private stakeholders across the country have been co-ordinating their efforts to ensure a strong voice at all levels of government. The B.C. government is one of the provincial supporters of the project, along with the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces.

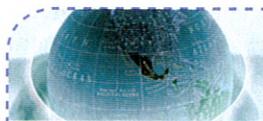
Canadian consumers do have access to an abundant range of natural health products and foods already recognized in the U.S. and other countries as being "functional" beyond their nutritional content. However, claims for such foods in labelling and advertising are not permitted under Canada's current federal food regulations. Part of Nutri-Net Canada's activities will be to help the federal government develop a more modern system of regulation that permits additional and wider use of claims. This objective has already been declared by Canada's lead food regulator, Health Canada.

"A fair, timely and transparent process for the regulation of functional foods needs to be developed," says Kelley Fitzpatrick, chair of the Western Canada Functional Food and Natural Health Product Network, a steering committee member. At the same time, there needs to be assistance to small and medium enterprises as many are in the developmental stages in Canada. Fitzpatrick says the areas where Nutri-Net will help range from product development and commercializing technology, to forming and developing strategic alliances within a global marketplace.

Nutri-Net Canada collaborators are confident that the funding boost will accelerate growth by developing initiatives and conducting activities that will provide value to the entire supply chain, from farmer to processor to consumer.

"This is an important initiative that will ultimately enhance consumer understanding and choice of functional foods and natural health products," says Anne Wilkie, CHFA vice-president and head of Regulatory Affairs.

— Natalie Cajic



GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

TOP FIZZ

Soft drinks have been a favourite thirst quencher for over a century, and regional ingredients have influenced new flavour innovation since the very beginning. *Food in Canada* looked at some of the most unique brands from around the world that are giving everyday cola a run for its money.

- First introduced in the U.S. during prohibition, Green River – a bright green, lime-flavoured soda – is on the verge of a comeback thanks to Chicago, Ill.-based Clover Club Bottling Co., Inc. Clover Club bought the brand in 2006 and has plans to launch

a diet version later this year.

- Pepsi Ice Cucumber was launched this summer in Japan. The limited-release, mint-coloured soda is artificially flavoured to taste like fresh cucumber.
- Inca Kola has been a formidable competitor to both Pepsi and Coca-Cola in its native Peru for decades. "The flavour of Peru" is light-yellow golden cola with a sweet flavour resembling bubblegum.
- Mexicans love ToniCol, a vanilla-flavoured soft drink that hails from the state of Sinaloa.
- France-based Ricolès soda was originally released in 1838 as a mint-flavoured alcoholic beverage. Today, the mint soda is still a hit without the alcohol.

