

SECOND CONSENSUS WORKSHOP ON NOVEL FOOD

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Abstract

The industry point-of-view – a successful application – Unilever yellow fat spread. Perspectives on Functional Foods: The case “pro.activ”

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Consumers recognise the connection between their lifestyle and health and they are increasingly looking for preferred food choices for their everyday health and well-being. Advances in nutrition sciences and technology lead to new insights into the effects of food ingredients on physiological functions and consequently generate interest among science experts, health professionals and consumers. This in turn stimulates the food industry to meet consumer demand for foods and drinks that promote the general health and wellbeing and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. This new segment of the food industry is called functional foods: foods and beverages with claimed specific health benefits based on scientific evidence.

Becel/Flora pro.activ, which is a vegetable oil spread enriched with plant sterols, provides an excellent example of an effective way to reduce the risk of heart disease and to maintain good health via an easy life style change. An elevated blood cholesterol level is well-established risk factor for coronary vascular disease and this particular product has been scientifically proven to lower blood LDL-cholesterol by around 10%. A decrease of LDL-cholesterol of this magnitude would be expected to result in a reduction of risk of heart disease of 25%. The evidence presented of this functional food provides health professionals and consumers alike with the assurance that the consumption of this spread is safe and effective. This case sets a standard to be followed by future development of functional foods. The market success of these foods depends on a good insight into consumer needs and wants, sound scientific underpinning of product efficacy and safety, clear and truthful consumer communication and follow up post launch monitoring. Evidently, the ultimate success of functional foods requires a transparent and efficient regulatory framework for approval of new products and their associated health claims.

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