



WWW.ISTOCKPHOTO.COM BRADLEY L MARLOW

Baobab tree fruit pulp has a long history of safe use outside the European Union

Fast-track to novelty

ELAINE WATSON

The European Commission should consider introducing a 'fast-track' procedure that takes account of a food's safe history of use outside Europe as part of its review of the Novel Food Regulation, regulatory experts have argued.

Dr Jörg Grünwald, founder of Phytopharm Research, which specialises in the scientific research of natural substances, said: "Some foods have a long history of safe use in Africa but they still have to go through this tortuous process to be allowed in Europe. It's a nightmare. In the past eight years less than two-dozen novel food applications have gone through."

Dr John Wilkinson, director of Herbal Sciences International, which has helped several companies prepare novel food applications, said: "What I'd like to see is some clear guidance outlining exactly

what data companies will need to submit."

Their comments came as South African trade association PhytoTrade Africa was preparing to put in an application with the UK Food Standards Agency to register products containing the fruit pulp of the baobab tree as novel foods in Europe.

Market development manager Cyril Lombard said: "Baobab fruit pulp contains lots of vitamins and minerals and prebiotic and antioxidant qualities. It's used widely in Africa in beverages such as smoothies, where it provides body, and to fortify products like porridge. At the moment we're talking about a dry powder, but other formats are being developed."

The European Commission plans to revise the Novel Food Regulation in a bid to "create a more favourable legislative environment for innovation in the food industry, and to better facilitate both internal and external trade in foodstuffs"

Healthy... and farcical

Products making claims about children's health and development may have to be removed from the market only to reappear again later owing to a regulatory cock-up, manufacturers have claimed.

Speaking at an Agra Informa conference on European food law in Brussels, Coca-Cola's EU director of regulatory affairs Andreas Kadi said that the final text of the new European Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation had failed to agree a transitional period during which products featuring claims about children could remain on the market while the new regulation was phased in.

Given that such claims may well be approved at a later date under the prior authorisation procedure laid out in the new regulation, forcing manufacturers to pull products or change their labels as soon as the regulation came in, represented a "disproportionate distortion of the market," he said.

Meanwhile, the recent compromise reached over the nutrient profiling article in the regulation may simply confuse consumers further, he claimed. "You could have two products that both fail to meet the nutrient profile criteria next to each other on the shelf. If one of them wants to make a nutrition claim like 'contains vitamin C', it will also have to say 'high in sugar' on the label.

"However, the pack next door, which might have three times the sugar content and no obvious health benefits, does not have to say 'high in sugar' on the label because it is not making a nutrition claim. This only confuses consumers."

Mineral boost

Researchers at the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences have developed GM strains of wheat and barley that could significantly boost mineral absorption owing to their unusually high levels of a heat resistant form of the enzyme phytase.

Nestlé's bioactive prospects

Scientists at Nestlé's research centre in Lausanne claim their studies on the molecular physics of carbohydrates could enable technological advances in the storage of bioactive compounds.

Krill calms you down

Interim results from a study exploring the effects of krill oil on adult attention

deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have shown a marked improvement in concentration among patients. The oil used was extracted from krill by Neptune Technologies & Bioresources.

Cranberries fight food poisoning

New research from the University of Maine has revealed that adding natural cranberry concentrate to raw minced beef can significantly reduce the growth of salmonella, listeria and E. Coli, paving the way for cranberry products to replace chemical additives as natural preservatives in raw meat.

Fenchem launches new HA study

Fenchem is conducting a clinical study of Hyamax, its branded oral

grade hyaluronic acid (HA), to gain further understanding of its effects on joint health. The study will test a range of molecular weights of HA on animals and humans.

FFNet comes to Liverpool

The next meeting of the European-wide functional foods networking group, Functional FoodNet, will be held in Liverpool, UK, on September 18-19, 2006. It includes sessions on diet, health, consumers, regulation and case studies on applications of functional ingredients in dairy, beverages, oils, cereals and baked goods. Register at: www.functionalfoodnet.org or email cs@catherineside.com.

In brief