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New soy ingredient could re-invigorate cardio foods market, predicts Scoular

By Elaine Watson, 08-Dec-2011

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A soy-based ingredient packing four times the nutritional punch of standard soy protein isolate could reinvigorate the cardiovascular functional food market, according to bosses at agri-food giant The Scoular Company.

LunaSoy is a finely ground soy complex developed by Missouri-based Soy Labs containing "four times the amount of bioavailable lunasin content compared to industry standard soy protein isolate, gram-for-gram", Anne Brown, senior manager of Scoular's food ingredients marketing group, told NutraIngredients-USA.

While Soy Labs first started talking about LunaSoy in 2009, Brown said it had only recently become commercially available, and is now being marketed and distributed by Scoular after the firm became Soy Labs' North American marketing partner last month.

According to Soy Labs, lunasin selectively disrupts a necessary step in the production of a key enzyme, HMG-CoA reductase. When levels of that enzyme are constricted, the liver produces less cholesterol.

It is also thought lunasin up-regulates the expression of the LDL-receptor gene, thus increasing the number of receptors available to clear LDL cholesterol from the bloodstream, claims the firm.

An alternative to wheat and glutinous grains in bakery applications

Brown added: "There is a growing body of research showing that the lunasin peptide is one of the most important bioactive components of soy. But many soy products have low levels of the lunasin peptide, questioning whether consumers are receiving all of the health benefits associated with soy."

Functionally, LunaSoy is very like soy flour, with a neutral flavor profile, (no bitter or toast notes), a slightly yellowish color and high solubility, said Brown.

This made it suitable for a wide range of products including nutrition bars; soy milks, smoothies and yogurts; soups and hot beverage mixes; powdered protein shakes; bakery products (replacing 15-40% of regular flours depending on application); and any other products using soy flours.

"LunaSoy is functionally and nutritionally related to expeller pressed soy flour. Initial business is expected to come from firms already using soy flour who wish to improve the nutritional profile of their products.

"It may also be used as an alternative to wheat and glutinous grains in bakery applications."

Unique nutritional properties

While ingredients such as Clarisoy – the new 'invisible' soy protein from Burcon/ADM for beverages – delivered "unique functional properties", LunaSoy delivered "unique nutritional properties", said Brown.

"Including products enhanced with LunaSoy in a typical diet provides sources of high-quality, bio-available lunasin that deliver the cardio health benefits of less-palatable forms of soy protein."

A way to re-invigorate the soy segment?

Scoular, which already sells soy proteins, soy flours, and several other ingredients geared towards the functional food and dietary supplement sectors, has also taken over distribution of Soy Labs' Lunasin XP ingredient, the bioactive peptide contained in LunaSoy, said Brown.

While the soy foods and supplements market had taken a bit of a beating in recent years, there have been pockets of growth, and a renewed interest in protein-rich products, claimed Brown.

"Scoular sees these ingredients as a way to re-invigorate the soy segment which has already seen a renewed interest in the push towards protein-rich diets."

Lunasin XP

Lunasin XP – which is set to feature in a number of new dietary supplements in 2012 - is a patented bioactive soy peptide extract that supports cardiovascular health and exhibits anti-inflammatory properties.

The ingredient, which is currently used in capsules and powdered protein mixes from Carefast Products, and in Eicolife nutritional powders – “*differentiates itself in the cardio health category by delivering large benefits via small dosages*”, claimed Brown.

“A 250 mg dose of Lunasin XP has the beneficial health properties of consuming 25 grams of soy protein.”

A claim authorized by the FDA in 1999 allows firms to use the wording: ‘25g of soy protein a day, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease’.

Lunasin XP does not cause allergic reaction in soy allergy sufferers

While soy is one of the ‘big eight’ allergens in the US, Lunasin XP does not cause allergic reactions in soy allergy sufferers, claimed Brown.

“Lunasin XP is a soy peptide concentrate that is derived from the 2S albumin, which has been determined not to be a major allergen.”

She added: “*Soy being an allergen concern for many consumers, we have anticipated some reluctance from manufacturers and have made the research available regarding the potential allergenicity of the soy 2S albumins.*”

“While Scoular sees Lunasin XP being used in conjunction with other soy ingredients where the allergen issue is not a concern, Lunasin XP is suitable for non-soy based applications as well.”

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