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Cargill says EFSA health claim will transform beverage fibre fortunes

By Guy Montague-Jones, 16-Mar-2010

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Cargill has revealed that its Barliv barley beta fibre is finally poised to make its way into beverage products following a favourable EFSA opinion for a beta-glucan health claim.

Back in October 2009 the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) issued a positive scientific opinion on the relationship between beta-glucan and healthy blood cholesterol.

Product history

Cargill claims this news could transform the fortunes of its Barliv ingredient in Europe. First launched at Health Ingredients Europe at the end of 2006 the barley beta fiber has yet to be used in a European beverage.

Henry Hussell, marketing manager for nutrition in Europe, told BeverageDaily.com that the ingredient has found a couple of applications in the bakery area but has failed to make it into the beverage arena.

And yet the distinctive feature of Barliv is its suitability for drinks. Because of its low viscosity the ingredient may be used in beverages such as juices without making them thicker or cloudy.

The beverage world is the real target market for Barliv, and with a positive EFSA health claim opinion for beta-glucan, Cargill expects that the ingredient will finally come of age in Europe.

Spike in interest

Hussell said there has been a lot more interest in Barliv since the positive opinion came through. The marketing manager said people have come knocking on the door because all other cholesterol fighting ingredients suitable for drinks have so far failed to make the EFSA health claims cut.

A spike in interest is poised to translate into Barliv containing drinks on European shelves as Hussell says new launches are expected in the coming few months.

Barliv can be added to drinks at a concentration of around 0.75g per 250ml, without upsetting viscosity or clarity. So long as the positive EFSA opinion on beta-glucan is approved, products containing the ingredient should be able to carry a health claim along the lines of: *"3 grams per day of barley beta-glucan, as part of a diet low in saturated fat, and a healthy lifestyle, can help manage normal blood cholesterol."*

Having secured a position on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval list in 2008 for a health claim related to heart disease risk, Barliv has won its drinks debut in the US, where beverage firm Bolthouse Farms is working with Cargill.

In the past Cargill has struggled to promote Barliv and the idea of soluble fibre health to drink manufacturers. As such ingredients tend to be too viscous for drinks they have very little precedence in the industry. Cargill is banking on the EFSA health claim situation providing the spur to convince formulators of the potential of a barley beta-glucan concentrate in drinks.

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