

Hydrocolloids and International Cooperation between Academia and Industry

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Summary

It is nice to see the second special issue derived from the International Forum on arabinogalactan protein.

It is well known that the role of hydrocolloids to control the texture, which is one of the most decisive factor for the palatability, is important and that hydrocolloids are widely used in food industry. Since the recent change in legislation on food additives, it is admitted to display on a label "thickening polysaccharides" when more than two different natural polysaccharides without specifying the individual names such as pectin, carrageenan, xanthan gum, gellan gum, arabinogalactan etc. For those who know some ingredients, this method of display seems to be too simple and they may wish to know more about the polysaccharides used in such processed foods. However, with the advent of small package of foods sold in a so-called convenience store, it is difficult to display the details of all ingredients on a limited space of a label.

It is nice to see that there is a growing interest in hydrocolloids when people talk about the importance of educational aspect of food and eating. As is well known, most food polysaccharides except starch are useful not only for the texture control, but also are dietary fibres and have beneficial physiological functions, which is now a hot topics in food science. FFI Journal has been contributing to the spread of useful knowledge in food science for both scientists and technologists and general public. We are all expecting that the journal continues to publish interesting articles in food science and arts. Since the variety is the most important aspect in foods, there should be no end of the journal, and so it is never ending.

The details of the organization process of the International Forum and the importance of the international cooperation between academia and industry were already written by Professor Phillips and Dr. Ogasawara in the first issue, and it is expected that the international cooperation will be developed further in the near future. There are still many unknown problems and characteristics in food hydrocolloids although there have been extensive efforts to understand the relation between structures and properties, which is very important for developing further application in food processing. Food engineers and technologists are sometimes too busy to examine the structure and properties of each polysaccharide, and are apt to do only trial and error method or at most to start from the "established" fact. It is important to have stimulating

interaction between fundamental science and industrial application. It is indeed wonderful to see that the International Forum was successful and that the organizer Prof. Phillips has been organizing the long run international conference "Gums and Stabilisers for the Food Industry", so-called Wrexham Conference or Gums Conference for more than 25 years. Another series of international conference on hydrocolloids (IHC), which has been organized every two years when there is no Gums Conference, has been also effective to activate the cooperation between academia and industry. The 8th IHC will be held in Trondheim in June 2006, and the 14th Gums Conference will be held in Wrexham in June 2007. It is a pity to see not so many participants from Japan to these international conferences, but I hope that many researchers will be interested in the near future.