

6th Symposium of Japanese Society of Food Chemistry – Health Food Including so Called Health Food

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Summary

The 16th Symposium of the Japanese Society of Food Chemistry was held at Osaka Pharmaceutical Industry Pension Culture Service Center on November 2, 2004, with about 160 people participating.

Recently public health concern is growing, due to inadequate nutritional intake from an unbalanced diet, increase in obesity and lifestyle-related diseases, and an aging society. Now, the nutritional claims are one of the important standards when consumers select food products. People are tending to require more nutritional benefits from foods and their demands have become more diversified, ranging from improving physical functions to maintaining physical condition indexes such as blood pressure or blood sugar level.

In order to respond to current demand, new science technologies such as food component analysis have been advanced for researching the nutritional benefits of foods. Many nutritional functions are found and used in various functional foods.

On the other hand, the flood of information on health and foods makes people confused. Inappropriate information without scientific basis accelerates the excessive intake of functional foods creating an inappropriate diet. Many cases of health being damaged are reported, especially caused by Chinese diet products. Being concerned about the current situation, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare revised the Food Sanitation Law and instituted a tentative regulation prohibiting the sales of particular diet products such as tablets and capsules. However, many health foods including foods with health claims still flood the market.

Following the United States and EU, the Japanese government is considering the adoption of the Codex regulations for health claims for functional food, reduction of disease risk claims, and the scientific basis contributing to health benefits.

Through several speeches from all quarters, this symposium offered the opportunity for participants to recognize the current state of health foods.

In order to enhance the reliability and morality of health claims, provide more appropriate information and protect consumers' health, it proposed the roles that central and local governments, food industry and consumers should play at each standpoint.

The symposium started with a speech by Hirofumi Ohama, Ph.D., (President, Biohealth Research Ltd.) who spoke on "Regulations on health foods in foreign countries".

The following speeches were delivered afterwards; Takaharu Tanaka, Ph.D., (Director, Chief Executive, Institute for Advanced Technology, SUNTORY Ltd.) with "Development of Functional Food Materials", Yukihiro Goda, Ph. D., (Head, Division of Pharmacognosy, Phytochemistry and Narcotics, National Institute of Health Sciences) with "Classification of Foods and Pharmaceuticals and Non-approved Pharmaceuticals", Sachie Ikegami, Ph.D., (Professor of Otsuma Woman's University, Former Chief, Division of Food Science, National Institute of Health and Nutrition) with "Basic philosophy on health benefit evaluation of food for specified health use", Katsumi Imaida, Ph.D., (Professor, Department of Onco-Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, Kagawa University) with "Basic philosophy on safety evaluation of food for specified health use", Yasumasa Nishiyama (Office of Health Policy on Newly Developed Foods, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) with "Regulations for health food". Masami Fujii, Ph. D., (Advisor of Japanese Society of Food Chemistry, Former Director of Food Chemistry Division, Environmental Health Bureau, Ministry of Health and Welfare) delivered a closing speech. Speakers and participants exchanged their opinions at a reception after the symposium.

The editorial office of FFI Journal offered the opportunity to disseminate the contents of this symposium. We therefore contribute the summaries of the following four addresses based on their original speeches. The editorial office of FFI Journal is responsible for the content. Should there be any question or opinion, please feel free to contact the FFI Journal office.