



The superfood movement

‘Superfood’ has become a commonly used term, but what kind of research is behind these foods to confirm their effects? *Organic & Natural Business* reports.

There are differing opinions about what substances constitute a superfood, but the general consensus is that they are those that are high in a range of nutrients.

But there is a danger that the term becomes diluted by brands jumping on the ‘superfoods’ bandwagon by selling products that fail to deliver the expected health benefits.

“I think the term has caused some confusion to customers,” commented Jon Inder, of Rio Trading, which supplies a range of superfoods from South America. “When each new food introduced onto the market is hailed as the ‘perfect food’, and when foods most of us eat regularly are suddenly rebranded as ‘super’ it all gets a bit ridiculous.

“Most foods, if grown in good mineral-rich soils under the sun, are potentially nutritious – so it is not just the food but how it is grown that counts. One easy way to boost the low nutrient levels found in large amounts of the food we eat is to supplement with superfoods.”

So, what products could you be promoting as so-called superfoods?

Inder advised: “My definition would be a food that provides either a very wide range of nutrients in reasonable amounts, or one that contains exceptionally high levels of a specific nutrient. These foods are particularly valuable in the diet as they may provide high nutritional value for your calories.”

Seaweed can be considered a superfood. Not only is it full of vitamins, minerals and amino acids, it has also been shown to be particularly effective as a salt replacement, offering a major health benefit in trying to get people to cut their salt intake.

Inder also pinpointed Maca as a superior superfood.

“If you look at the nutrient content of Maca, then it easily qualifies as a superfood. Although the most famous root to come from the Andes

Mountains is the potato, Maca must be the most nutritious. It also has many benefits as a herbal medicine.”

Also well accepted as a superfood is açai, which boasts an extremely rich range of nutrients that is particularly beneficial as an antioxidant. Other nutrients found in açai berries include plant sterols, omega 6 and 9, many vitamins and minerals, and almost all essential amino acids. It has nearly the same protein content as eggs with the only missing amino acid being tryptophan.

“Most of us could benefit from some kind of antioxidant supplementation as most of us are exposed to high levels of damaging free radicals regularly, and the typical diet simply doesn’t provide enough antioxidants to mop these up,” Inder said.

Green barley is also a good choice because of the enzyme it offers, as well as its high content of chlorophyll, a known blood cleanser.

“Supplementation with green barley therefore stands to boost digestion, helping you to absorb more nutrients from the other foods in your diet, and also aids detoxification,” Inder added.

In fact, it contains over 70 nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, amino acids and enzymes, in particular super oxide dismutase (SOD), which is a powerful free radical scavenger. Regular users of green barley supplements report increased energy, better digestion and improvements in hair, skin and nail quality. It has also been shown to reduce inflammation, lower cholesterol and detoxify the body.

Research Investment

The difference between those brands jumping on the superfood bandwagon, and those true superfood brands, can be seen in the investment made on research.

Seagreens is one of those companies that has heavily committed to research. The company was formed in 1997 to supply wrack seaweed to the human diet, and pioneered human food-quality harvesting and production of wild seaweed first in Norway, then Scotland.

British Government funding has enabled Seagreens to participate in research by the Centre for Food Innovation at Sheffield Hallam University. The project sought natural alternatives to salt, fat and sugar in manufactured foods. The initial research showed the seaweed to be an effective bacteriostat, prolonging shelf life as effectively as salt, to stabilise water content and buffer pH balance.

“Since 2007 we have focused on salt and have shown beyond reasonable doubt that Seagreens can indeed effectively replace salt, and most consumers prefer the taste,” commented founder, Simon Ranger.

Then, in 2009, a new harvesting joint venture was created in the Scottish Outer Hebrides, and so Seagreens’ research and development capability moved to Scotland. In that year, the company also began research into satiety and obesity, and this year has set up its own not-for-profit research foundation, called the Seaweed Health Foundation.

This year, there has been further microbiological and antioxidant studies and a series of trials, which have revealed that 75 per cent of panellists prefer plain white bread in which 50 per cent of the salt has been replaced by Seagreens, and in wholemeal bread, the figure was 67 per cent.

“Working with our partners in industry, academia and the grant funding bodies, we can develop and share valuable intellectual properties based on this healthy, natural food.”

Behind the green jar

Seagreens is pioneering a British and European standard for harvesting human food quality seaweed, an innovation with wide application in food and healthcare. Research at the Centre for Food Innovation in Sheffield has shown that Seagreens® whole food, dried wild seaweed granules can replace up to 50% of the processed salt which is ubiquitous in manufactured foods, a cause of acidity and cardiovascular disease.

Most recently Seagreens conducted a study in obesity with promising results. Seagreens seaweed is well established as a detoxicant, prebiotic and complete nutritional foundation high in antioxidants, daily use providing a powerful basis for preventive health and therapeutic protocols.

And Seagreens® supplies its Certified Ingredients to others like Artisan Bread, Bart Spices, Marilyn Glenville, Napiers, Neals Yard Remedies, Pukka Herbs, Viridian and Waitrose. The company has 3 divisions: Seagreens Consumer Products, Seagreens Certified Ingredients, and Hebridean Seagreens.

The founding aim was "to get a small daily amount of the best seaweed into the human diet" (O&NB 2008). Expertise gained through initial operations in Norwegian Lapland now informs a new production facility in the Scottish Outer Hebrides.



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The *healthy* option

Seagreens® Organic wild seaweeds are sustainably harvested in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. They provide a complete dietary foundation for continuous everyday use, fill nutritional gaps in other foods, and are just the thing for preventive health. Available in 100% vegetable Food Capsules or Granules, Culinary Ingredient, Salad & Condiment and Pet Granules.

"The best kelp product in the UK" - Mail on Sunday 2010

"Britain's leading seaweed company" - Organic & Natural Business 2009



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