

# Functional Food and Dietary Supplement Trends in Japan

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## Abstract

With the recent trends toward an aging society and healthcare cost escalation in Japan, it is important to promote the spread of self-medication and increase healthy life expectancy through the better use and development of pharmaceuticals and new functional foods. The popularity of functional foods including dietary supplements and natural health products is growing at a remarkable speed, and is impacting health promotion, as well as disease prevention and therapy. With a market of more than USD \$10 billion in dietary supplements and \$21 billion in functional foods, Japan has maintained its position as the third largest nutrition market in the world. The market has been established by a number of domestic companies selling mainly via direct channels. The function claim on food labels has only been allowed for government-approved Foods for Specified Health Uses (FOSHU) and for Foods with Nutrient Function Claims (FNFC) that comply with the specifications and standards designated by the government. As a part of Abenomics, a growth strategy by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government decided to lift the ban on functional claims for food products, including dietary supplements, functional foods and agricultural foods. In addition to these categories (FOSHU and FNFC), this new type of Foods with Health Claims, called "Foods with Function Claims", was introduced in April 2015 in order to make more products available clearly labeled with certain nutritional or health functions and to enable consumers to make more informed choices. Thus, those products that cannot be categorized as foods with health benefit claims are classified simply as "health foods," and they are not allowed to claim health benefits.

For the enhancement of public acceptance of such new foods, it is extremely important to appraise their efficacy and safety based on scientific evidences. As a second topic, I will introduce our current research projects in our Center for Pharma-Food Research (CPFR).

**Keywords:** FOSHU; FNFC; Foods with Function Claims; Pharma-Food Research