**Probiotic Introduction**

In 2017, the Probiotics market’s predicted growth was 45.64 billion with a forecasted increase to 64.02 billion USD by 2022. Consumer awareness regarding the benefits of probiotics, increasing demand for animal feed enriched with nutrients, and the associated demand for probiotic dietary supplements appears to be driving the increase and forecasted increase in the Probiotics market (Newswire, 2017).

So, what is all the excitement and fuss about Probiotics? Interestingly, the probiotic concept is not new when you consider that Elie Metchnikoff, the Nobel laureate introduced the idea of administering bacteria to yield a positive health effect over a century ago to the scientific community (Metchnikoff, 1908).

**What are Probiotics?**

Let’s take a trip through the scientific literature to answer some questions about probiotics.

**Probiotic Definition**

The Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization define probiotics as products containing viable microorganisms or ‘live organisms’ with an adequate amount of probiotic bacteria to exert a positive effect (WHO, 2006). To be functional in foods and dietary supplements, probiotics must possess the following abilities: 1. Resist the breakdown by gastric juices in the stomach and 2. Continue to grow in the presence of bile. The probiotic bacteria that meet these requirements are Gram positive and fall in two main genera, *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* (Holzapfel, Haberer et al., 1998; Klein, Pacj et al., 1998).

The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) provide additional clarity to the definition for probiotics which includes the following key points: 1. Probiotics must be alive in the product and/dietary supplement when they are ingested. 2. The health benefits of the probiotic in the intended person/animal/host must be confirmed in a controlled study/evaluation. 3. The genus, species, and strain level of the bacteria or bacteria combination must be defined. 4. The probiotic must be safe at the level and use it is intended to be used (Gibson, Hutkins et al., 2017).

**Viability (live)**

With viability of the bacteria/microbe a key factor, the requirement for foods and dietary supplements must carry through until the end of shelf life. Dietary supplements have a low water activity and have shelf lives of up to two years with ambient storage conditions. Unlike dietary supplements, foods containing probiotics typically have a high water activity, often require refrigeration, and have very short shelf life (often weeks/months vs. years). The dosage level of the bacteria needs to be sufficient to deliver the intended benefit at the beginning and the end of the shelf life under ambient storage conditions (Ouwehand, 2015).

**Dose**

The level/dose of the bacteria/microbe is significant to the performance of the product, dependent on the population, and likely dependent on the strain and/or combination of probiotic strains. The monograph for Health Canada indicates at least 10⁷ (10,000,000) colony-forming units for a general probiotic claim (Natural Health Products, 2015). A common rule of thumb for the dose is 10⁹ (1,000,000,000) CFU, but the probiotic strain and/or combination of strains, product form, expected storage conditions of the product form, target population, and desired health benefits are key elements dictating the dosage (Ouwehand, 2015).

**Health Benefits**

Probiotic products are intended to help reduce the risk for gastrointestinal disturbances and/or assist in maintaining optimal gastrointestinal health. The majority of probiotics are marketed as foods and/or dietary supplements. Probiotics have been extensively studied and explored throughout the world; however, the effects of probiotics are species and strain specific. The numerous human and animal studies across the various species and strains of probiotics point to improvements in intestinal homeostasis, diarrhea, constipation, strengthening of the intestinal barrier integrity, and maintenance of normal intestinal pH (Kumar, Naggal et al., 2016).

A key health benefit suggested from a meta-analysis conducted on the data of 11 clinical trials and 464 subjects with 13 treatment effects was reduced intestinal transit time in adults (ITT) with short-term (10-28 days) probiotic supplementation. The effects also are strongly impacted by the presence or absence of constipation, the age of the subject, and the specific probiotic strain (Miller & Ouwehand, 2013).

**Genera/Species - Benefits**

Among probiotics, the *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* have numerous studies associated with their genera and are the most commonly studied genera. Although not as well studied and utilized, additional species/strains have been studied for their potential health benefits as probiotics (Table 1) (Fijan, 2014).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probiotic Species</th>
<th>Probiotic Genera</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Lactobacillus</em></td>
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<td><em>L. reuteri</em></td>
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<td><em>L. helveticus</em></td>
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**L. acidophilus - Benefits**

The probiotic genera, *lactobacillus*, accounted for the largest probiotic market share in 2016 (Newswire, 2017). *Lactobacillus acidophilus* has been shown to have a beneficial effect on lactose digestion in the digestive tract as an adjunct for milk (Kim & Gillard, 1983). Additionally, research has shown *lactobacillus acidophilus* creates an environment in the gastrointestinal tract that defends against foodborne pathogens and spoilage organisms. An enhanced immune response of the host has been reported among the following organisms including: *B. longum, L. acidophilus, L. casei subsp. Rhamnosum,* and *Lactobacillus helveticus* (Isoluri, Rautava et al., 2002). Lower serum cholesterol levels were observed in rats fed with milk containing *L. acidophilus* and notably Gilliland et al showed that dietary elevation of plasma cholesterolemia in humans can be prevented through the introduction of a bile-resistant and cholesterol-assimilating strain of *L. acidophilus* (Grunewald, 1982; Gillard, Nelson et al., 1985).

**B. bifidobacterium longum – Benefits**

The probiotic genera, *bifidobacterium longum* has been shown along with lactobacillus acidophilus to improve the immune system when administered as a whey probiotic beverage. The findings of this research suggest that the immune system improvements are related to improvements in plasma lipid profile and the antioxidant power of the probiotics (Lollo, de Moura et al., 2013). The *Bifidobacterium longum* BB536 also has been reported to have various physiological effects including lower harmful bacteria levels and an improved gastrointestinal environment (Yaeshima, Takahashi et al., 1997; Odamaki, Sugahara et al., 2012).
PREBIOTICS

Prebiotic - Introduction

According to the Grand View Research Inc., the prebiotics market is expected to achieve USD 7.11 billion by 2024. Fiber-rich products are thriving and fueling the demand for prebiotics. The emphasis on improved health and well-being is expected to propel the demand over the next eight years. The extensively-studied prebiotic, inulin, accounted for 40% of the 2015 global prebiotics market in terms of revenue. Dietary supplements containing prebiotics are projected to drive market demand over the next several years (PR_Newswire, 2016).

Prebiotic – Overview

Prebiotics are defined as non-digestible (by the host) food ingredients having a positive or beneficial effect on the intestinal tract via their metabolism. There are three factors that each prebiotic ingredient should demonstrate to be classified as a prebiotic: 1) Resistance to gastric acidity, hydrolysis by mammalian enzymes and gastrointestinal absorption; 2) Fermentation by the microflora of the intestines; 3) Selective stimulation and/or activity of intestinal bacteria contributing to positive health and well-being (Gibson, Probert et al., 2004).

Most of the ingredients/compounds that are accepted in industry as prebiotics are mainly carbohydrates, polysaccharides or oligosaccharides. Some of the compounds that should be considered “prebiotic” based on how they meet the prebiotic criteria include: inulin, fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS), galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS), isomalto-oligosaccharides, lactulose, lactosucrose, soybean oligosaccharides, and xylo-oligosaccharides (Rastall & Maitin, 2002). Interestingly, fruits and vegetables like chicory, artichokes, garlic, onions, bananas, and leeks comprise the main sources of naturally occurring prebiotics (Macfarlane & Cummings, 1999).

Prebiotic - Benefits

Prebiotics have recently received more awareness and their potential health benefits have been noted (Fig. 1). Prebiotics can serve as protectants of probiotic cultures found in foods i.e. dietary supplement powder. Often, these probiotic cultures are supplied in a dried form (encapsulated, spray-dried, or freeze-dried). In this form, probiotic cultures require protection to prevent activation and ensure stabilization during storage, and prebiotics are well-suited for this application (Ross et al, 2005). Prebiotics also are utilized to protect different strains of Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium from gastric and intestinal juices. Serving as the gastric armor for the probiotics, prebiotics also serve as an energy source once they reach the colon (Chen, Chen et al., 2005; Okuro, Thomazini et al., 2013).

Figure 1

Serve as an energy source for probiotics

Help prevent probiotic activation & stabilization

Prebiotic - Inulin

Inulin is a well-studied probiotic composed of a β-2,1-linked fructosyl backbone with a terminal glucose moiety. Although inulin is present in a wide variety of plants and vegetables, commercially produced inulin is extracted from chicory roots. Because the β-2,1-bonds of the inulin are not susceptible to breakdown through hydrolysis in the gastrointestinal tract, the inulin arrives in the colon intact. Once, the inulin arrives in the colon, it is fermented and completely broken down. Inulin is classified as a dietary fiber and meets the definition of a dietary fiber in almost every country worldwide. Through the extensive study of inulin, improvement in bowel function has been well supported (Hond, B. et al., 2000; Dahl, Wright et al., 2014). Additionally, inulin has been linked to improvements in mineral absorption, gut health and the influence of appetite and energy regulation (Abrams, Hawthorne et al., 2007) (Cani, Joly et al., 2006).

Emergent Prebiotic - Iso-malto-oligosaccharide

Iso-malto-oligosaccharides are manufactured from starch which is treated enzymatically with a mixture of α-amylase, α-glucosidase, and pullulanase. The degree of polymerization (DP) of the polysaccharide for the starch is up to 5. Because of its structure, a large portion of the Iso-malto-oligosaccharide reaches the colon, and the remainder is broken down by intestinal enzymes, which results in a rise in blood glucose levels (Oku & Nakamura, 2003). Benefits shown with human clinical studies include improvements in bowel function as well as decreases in total cholesterol levels (Chen, Lu et al., 2001; Yen, Tseng et al., 2011).
SYNBIONTICS

Overview

A symbiotic product combines one or more probiotic microorganisms with a prebiotic fiber.

PROBIOTIC + PREBIOTIC = SYNBIONTICS

The benefits associated with synbiotics is the optimization of bacterial survival and persistence in the gastrointestinal tract (Furrie, Macfarlane et al., 2005). The development of appropriately selected probiotics and prebiotics may enhance the beneficial effects of both synergistically (Bielecka, Biedrzycka et al., 2002; Holzapfel & Schillinger, 2002). The concept of synbiotics offers both opportunities for optimal benefits for foods and dietary supplements as well as stability for the product (Ross, Desmond et al., 2005).

REFERENCES


PR Newswire (2016). Prebiotics market analysis by ingredient (FOS, inulin, GOS, MOS), by application (food & beverages, animal feed, and dietary supplements) and segment forecasts to 2024. In Prebiotics market analysis by ingredient (FOS, inulin, GOS, MOS), by application (food & beverages, animal feed, and dietary supplements) and segment forecasts to 2024, New York, NY.


