

Scientists discover technique to help 'friendly bacteria'

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There is currently a great deal of interest in the health-associated properties of probiotics, also known as 'beneficial' or 'friendly' bacteria, and prebiotics, the food needed for the growth of probiotic when inside our bodies. University of Leicester scientists have discovered a natural fruit-based extract that dramatically improves the growth and probiotic qualities of 'friendly' bacteria such as the lactic acid bacteria, which are found in most widely-advertised health supplement drinks.

The fruit extract is the invention of Dr Primrose Freestone, of the University's DepartTMment of Infection, Immunity & Inflammation, and Dr Richard Haigh of the DepartTMment of Genetics. The product, LabEnhancerTM, is currently being marketed in collaboration with Dr Andy Lee, of Plant Bioscience Limited (www.pbltechnology.com). LabEnhancerTM elicited a great deal of interest when it was recently showcased by PBL at the International Probio2007 conference in Nantes.

As a result, over a dozen companies are now keen to exploit its potential in probiotic diagnostics, bulk culture processes and as a prebiotic supplement. LabEnhancerTM is therefore expected to have major applications in the world of probiotic and prebiotic technologies, and company evaluations are already underway.

Dr Freestone commented: 'We are delighted with the overwhelmingly positive response to Lab EnhancerTM amongst the probiotic and associated industries. I'm continuing to work closely with PBL in

promoting the technology and have been excited in the high level of interest that we have generated in such a short space of time. Although lactic acid bacteria play a major role in the production of many products, including probiotic yoghurts, they can be quite difficult to grow and can particularly suffer damage during their processing for use as probiotics. One of the main values of LabEnhancer™ is that it helps lactic acid bacteria to recover from these stresses therefore making them much more effective as a probiotic’.

Source: University of Leicester

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