

New biotech advance to add heart healthy omega-3s to US diet

March 16 2010

A new heart-healthy, essential omega-3 fatty acid is about to improve an American pantry staple: soybean oil. The new scientific advance will move biotechnology onto the average consumer's daily radar. U.S. soybean farmers are also using biotechnology to deliver positive environmental impacts and increase production to feed a growing world population.

Increased Omega-3 Crops on Horizon

Recently, the U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) issued a notice confirming that increased omega-3 [soybean oil](#) can be used in foods and beverages. Pending similar clearance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farmers can plant these new soybeans. The oil will lend itself well to a wide range of food products such as yogurts, [salad dressings](#), breakfast cereals, baked goods, nut products and soups.

Omega-3s are known to protect the heart, and may also play a role in [cancer prevention](#) and brain health. While fish oil is the preferred current source of omega-3s, many Americans do not consume the recommended levels.

Lead author of an American Heart Association human clinical study presented in 2009, Dr. William Harris, chief of cardiovascular health research and professor of medicine at Sanford School of Medicine, University of South Dakota, states that the increased omega-3 "soybean

oil could be an effective alternative to fish oil as a source of heart-healthy [omega-3 fatty acids](#)."

On the horizon are new soybeans that may help deliver more of soy's health benefits (from heart and bone health to some types of cancer prevention to easing symptoms of menopause) without having to dramatically eat more soy. Another soybean may help women and children with iron deficiency anemia absorb nutrients.

Soybeans with Significantly Less Pesticides/Herbicides

Soybean farmers have made major advances in production systems. Today, 92 percent of U.S. soybeans are derived from biotechnology. Lewis Bainbridge, a United Soybean Board (USB) director from South Dakota, says that farmers have embraced biotechnology and it impacts the average American, "The first generation of biotech soybeans focused on helping farmers control weeds. While this can seem a long way from the grocery store, it means that farmers are able to grow food for the public with significantly less pesticides and herbicides."

Laura Foell, a USB director from Iowa, adds, "As a parent and a farmer, I chose biotechnology because I wanted my kids eating safe, nutritious foods. After all, our vegetable garden for the family's meals is right next to our soybean fields, so it was important to reduce my farm's pesticide use. Biotechnology cut it by half."

Biotechnology Can Help Feed the World

The United Nations recognizes that biotechnology has the potential to improve the quantity and quality of food while protecting safety. It forecast the need to double food production by the year 2030 to prevent

global catastrophe. An estimated 800 million people around the world suffer from chronic food shortages, or else millions could go hungry.

"Most farmers are humanitarians," notes Foell. "We want to grow enough food to feed the world. Since we're not making any more land, we have to produce more high-quality food on every inch of farm land we've got."

Provided by United Soybean Board

Citation: New biotech advance to add heart healthy omega-3s to US diet (2010, March 16)
retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2010-03-biotech-advance-heart-healthy-omega-3s.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.