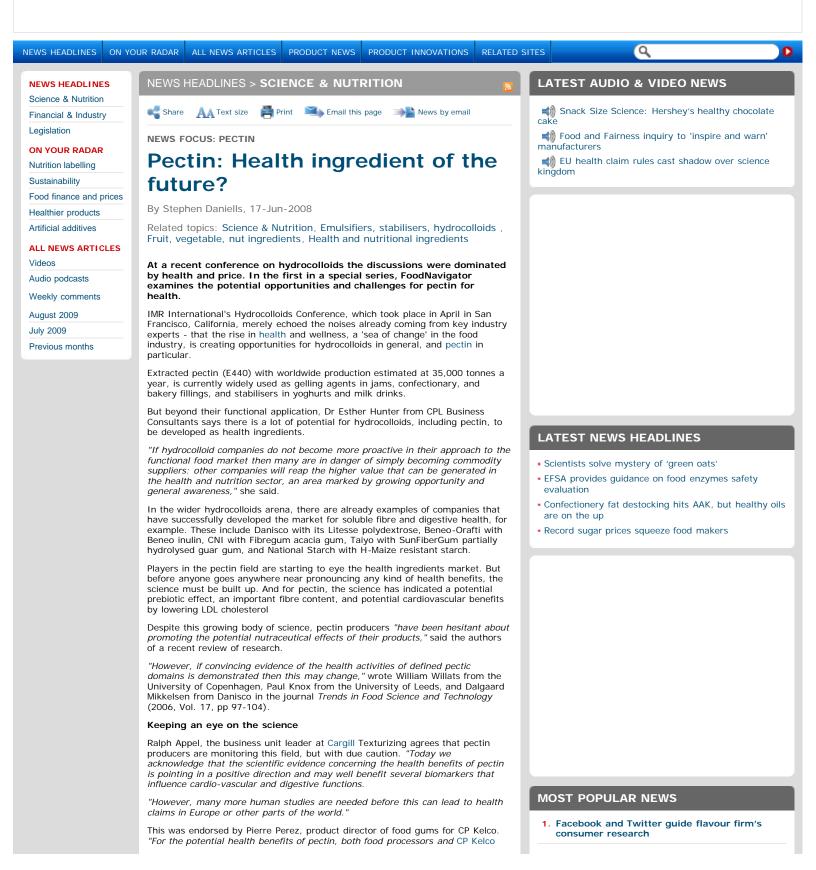


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need to ask, how solid are the claims and if they are not solid enough what needs to be done?

"This might require randomised clinical trials, and may engage large amounts of resources and funds. These need to be surveyed and analysed before anyone engages in claims."

Perez also added that the majority of studies around pectin as a health ingredient have been performed at university and laboratory level, but not scaled up or applied in industrial terms.

"If you dig into this you find that most of the time the use of high concentrations [that are needed to produce a physiological effect] are not feasible practically in a food," he said.

According to Dr. Steve Bodicoat, marketing and innovations director for CP Kelco, a number of standard major Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) food companies looking at the use of pectin as a health ingredient "to a higher or lesser extent".

But he cautioned that "you need to eat quite a lot of pectin, and there is a difficulty in consuming this amount.

"We have no plans to position pectin as a functional/health ingredient."

Spain's Obipektin, a division of Natraceutical, has taken a different stance and has positioned its highly methoxylated apple pectin (HMAP) as a health ingredient.

A team of representatives from Natraceutical said: "Our HMAP is a healthy ingredient. But if the manufacturer doesn't use the right process, HMAP can lose some properties."

Importantly, the ingredient reportedly has a low viscosity, which is very important, says Dennis Seisun from IMR International, a consultancy that publishes the Quarterly Review of Food Hydrocolloids.

"A major barrier to using hydrocolloids as health ingredients is getting the quantities into the product to produce a physiological effect. Addition of more than two to three per cent normal pectin and the product becomes too viscous," he said.

Tomorrow, FoodNavigator will look at health claims and labelling for pectin.

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