

# Oryza plans healthy growth in nutraceuticals market

Japanese cuisine has long been associated with healthy eating due to the use of natural, vitamin-rich ingredients. But Japan's age-old philosophy for treating food as a medicine has also made the country and its innovative manufacturers a natural fit to excel in the growing nutraceuticals market.



"We've introduced things like Sakura Extract (Japanese cherry blossom extract) and Fucoxanthin (the extract of konbu and wakame, a Japanese seaweed) to the world"

Hiromichi Murai,  
President & CEO, Oryza Oil  
& Fat Chemical Co., Ltd.

Over the last decade or so, the growing global appetite for Japanese food has been seemingly insatiable. It is not hard to understand why, when typical Japanese dishes are not only renowned for their extraordinary flavour, but also for their relative healthiness. Japanese food's incredible rise in popularity is also no surprise, therefore, when you consider its relatively recent ascent has coincided with an era defined by a shift in tastes toward more health-conscious eating habits. And just as this trend in healthy eating has broadened across continents as populations become more affluent, so too has the image of Japanese food as "health food". And so, its popularity grows and grows.

In Japan, however, the appreciation and predilection for foods based on their health properties is no modern fad, it is an age-old philosophy engrained in the national psyche. "Japan has a very different perspective and attitude towards food than the west," explains Hiromichi Murai, President of Oryza, whose line of business includes

manufacturing prepared foods and miscellaneous food specialties categorized as nutraceuticals – a term used to describe any product derived from food sources with extra health benefits.

"To us, food is a functional part of human health. In Europe, for example, when you get sick you go to the hospital, you get medicine, and follow a step-by-step approach to being treated. But in Japan, there is a special attitude towards the things we consume as being preventative by keeping us in constantly good health."

"In the West, food is food and medicine is medicine, the two don't overlap to heal together," says the Oryza president, further accentuating the differences in approaches. "But in our company, and in Japan, they do. Our medicines are our food products."

## A healthy opportunity in SE Asia

With such philosophy, it makes sense therefore that Japan has become a global leader of the rapidly growing nutraceutical market, which is estimated to expand into a \$723 billion industry by 2027. The key major trends of this growth will be the rising awareness of healthy eating in the Asia-Pacific region, where rising populations and incomes are directly increasing demand and ability to spend on healthier lifestyles.

"Whilst the Japanese market is not going to grow beyond its 2005 peak due to demographic issues and the like, there is space to grow elsewhere," says Mr. Murai. "Consumption and interest in functional foods and food products originating from Japan is increasing dramatically in China and Southeast Asia because their culture is similar to Japan and they love Japanese quality."

For this reason, the company recently opened a subsidiary in Thailand, which Mr. Murai considers a bridge to the rest of the region. "We chose Thailand for this actually because not only is it near Japan, but Thailand is very friendly with Malaysia, China and Indonesia, all of which have large populations and large potential markets for our products," he says.

## From rice bran to lingonberry

Whilst the foremost product of Oryza is natural rice bran oil – a source of natural Vitamin E, which contributes to the protection of cells – Mr. Murai describes nutraceuticals as the "lifeblood of the company". Most often nutraceuticals are grouped in the categories of dietary supplements, medicinal foods, or functional food – a group which includes whole foods and fortified, enriched or enhanced dietary components that may reduce the risk of chronic disease and provide a health-benefit beyond the traditional nutrients it contains.

"There are so many undiscovered naturally and non-naturally occurring food products that have huge potential for human beings on a global scale and this is what we strive to discover more of," explains Mr. Murai. "Many things, like maquiberry fruit and the nordic lingonberry, cannot be grown in

Japan. So, to deliver ingredients from all over the world, we partner with local farmers and source to meet our needs of what cannot be accessed domestically. Our catalogue displays our wide-reaching global supply chain with about 300 different kinds of food and cosmetics ingredients to create the finest products."

But this process also works from Japan outwards, he says: "We've introduced things like Sakura Extract (Japanese cherry blossom extract) and Fucoxanthin (the extract of konbu and wakame, a Japanese seaweed), to the world. Not only do we introduce, but we take into consideration how to make the product appealing abroad."

"Going forward, my dream is to make Oryza the top manufacturer in the world which can supply many different kinds of scientific evidence-based nutraceutical bulk ingredients."

Bringing  
undiscovered  
possibilities  
to the future  
through the union  
of nature and  
technology

**Oryza**

**ORYZA OIL & FAT CHEMICAL CO., LTD.**

[www.oryza.co.jp/](http://www.oryza.co.jp/)