

Synutra Ingredients promises to clean up chondroitin supply

By Stephen Daniells, 10-May-2013

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Concerns about chondroitin sources and adulteration are being tackled head on by Synutra Ingredients, which is offering 'adulterant-free branded chondroitin products with guaranteed source traceability', said the company's president.

Speaking with NutraIngredients-USA at the launch of its new branded materials Chondro Gold and Chondro Cal at the recent SupplySide Marketplace show in New York, Synutra's president Weiguo Zhang said: *"The idea is to hopefully play a positive role in helping the industry to clean up.*

"In this area we are a pioneer in terms of developing standard procedures to screen and identify adulterants.

"We are going to be leading the industry."

Cleaning up a 'blighted' supply chain

According to the company, the current supply of chondroitin is blighted by adulteration issues and questions over the source of the ingredient, with many suppliers aggregating source materials.

"In addition, the widespread use of porcine enzymes in the manufacturing processes used by small and scattered 'backyard' operations is complicating the situation," it said. *"Synutra Ingredients is the only manufacturer that has full control of the materials from source to product."*

The company claims to operate the only industry-scale facility with QA and QC, following current good manufacturing practices (cGMPs).

Current production comes in at 700 metric tons per year, said Zhang. A similar quantity of type II collagen is also produced. There is potential to increase production to 1,500 metric tons of each.

The market

Chondroitin sulphate is extracted from animal cartilage, such as sharks. In dietary supplements the compound is often formulated in combination with glucosamine.

Synutra's Zhang said that many chondroitin suppliers cannot tell you the source of their product, while Synutra has full traceability of sources, which include bovine, porcine, and avian.

[\(Attempts by DSM to produce a vegetarian source of chondroitin were put on ice in 2012](#) after the company determined that the final product would probably be prohibitively expensive.)

According to Synutra's website, sales of chondroitin sulfate sodium materials, together with various forms of glucosamine reached about \$235 million in 2012 in the US. The US imported about 3,500 metric tons of chondroitin in 2012, and about 3,000 in 2011, said Zhang.

The combination with glucosamine ranks number one in the joint health supplement category.

Previous studies, including the \$14m Glucosamine/chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT), sponsored by the National Institute of Health, have reported positive results, while others have reported null results, leaving the subject clouded in uncertainty.

While the company is not conducting any clinical research yet, it is investing in research into the materials side of the supply chain, and is focused on separating and identifying the adulterants in the supply chain.

"We'll then publicize this and have a positive effect on the supply chain," said Zhang.

"The opportunity for us is to come with a way to clean up the chondroitin supply."

The ingredients

The company is offering two branded chondroitin ingredients for the market: ChondroGold comes in various grade levels to meet the diversified needs of the customer. *"All ChondroGold materials meet United States Pharmacopoeia (USP) Dietary Supplement Compendium's documentary standards on chondroitin sulfate sodium,"* said the company.

ChondroCal offers chondroitin calcium in a non-sodium form. The specialized calcium content complements bone health, added Synutra.

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