

Majority of Nutraceuticals are non-regulated

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Demand of Nutraceuticals in India is witnessing an increasing trend however when compared with other markets we still have a long way to go



The huge demand for dietary supplements and additives, from people of different age groups, has given a huge boost to the Nutraceuticals industry and this trend looks all set to continue. Nutraceuticals are the fastest growing segment of the Biopharmaceutical industry and according to a 2018 ASSOCHAM Knowledge report, the Indian nutraceuticals market is expected to grow from \$4 billion in 2017 to \$18 billion in 2025.

What are nutraceuticals and how do they differ from other healthcare products

The term Nutraceuticals is often confused with Herbals & Natural products. However, Nutraceuticals are biological products that not only act as supplements and additives but also prevent & cure different disease.

The nomenclature and regulatory classification of nutraceuticals may vary from country to country, although, generally, these products are treated as a class of foods and food supplements which can be classified as probiotics, prebiotics, vitamins & minerals, herbs, standardised botanicals and amino acids

Emerging trends in the space

Awareness about the limitations of allopathic medicines and the desire for preventive healthcare make nutraceuticals extremely popular. This has encouraged large multinationals as well as domestic Pharma and FMCG companies to enter the space. The rapidly growing life style changes, like stress, sedentary lifestyle, lower levels of physical activity by a majority of the population and the pressure to perform at all levels, with a sound and alert mind and physically fit body, are

comprehensively addressed by Nutraceuticals. At the same time, concerns regarding consumption of allopathic medicines is another major driving force, which is adding to the rising demand of these products.

Besides this, there are many products in cosmetics, originating from Nutraceuticals, which are currently witnessing increased demand.

Concerns in the Indian context

Being a relatively nascent market, there are concerns about the genuineness of products being sold in this space in India.

As majority of Nutraceuticals are non-regulated, there are severe concerns related to their formulation, bioavailability, site and substrate specific delivery system and hence, these sometimes pose a threat to the health of consumers. Being mostly orally administered, the absorption, targetability, solubility, dissolution rate and intestinal permeability is also a big question, many a times. There are also many false claims regarding nutraceuticals, without any substantial data and clinical studies.

Users are being led to believe that Nutraceuticals are herbals and there are no adverse side effects; this is not always true. Being largely nonregulated market product formulations, composition and claims are getting tailor made which lacks science and technical equivalence.

In a 2015 study conducted by Assocham and market research service provider RNCOS, it was noted that about 60-70% of dietary supplements being sold across India are fake, counterfeit, unregistered and unapproved.

Demand of Nutraceuticals in India is witnessing an increasing trend however when compared with other markets we still have a long way to go. One of the key reasons for this is the huge dependency on imports of Nutraceutical raw materials. However, this can be seen as an opportunity.

The way forward for nutraceuticals in India

Once all these factors are addressed, with robust regulation, the Nutraceutical industry in India presents a vast opportunity to producers and could deliver numerous benefits to consumers.

Gaurav Kaushik, Managing Director & CEO, Meteoric Biopharmaceuticals