Recent Topics of Anxiety about R　D on Food Functionality

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Summary

Transgenic rice seeds containing the major T-cell epitope derived from cedar pollen allergens have been under development by National Institute of Agrobiological Sciences as a part of "Green-Techno Program" (2005-2009) granted by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.　However, it was reported on April this year that the seeds were decided not to be distributed as a food but as an antiallergic medicine as a result of consultation with Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Functional foods are the product originally proposed as a result of basic research on health beneficial functions of food related constituents by Japanese academic sector in the late 1980's.　In accordance with recent developments of human genomic research, it became very convenient for the function to be verified scientifically using a sort of sophisticated biomarkers developed as an achievement of nutrigenomics.

In addition, a severe competition of research on the food functionality expands globally at the present time.　Particularly, EU conducts R&D on nutrigenomics very strongly with a strategic plan in terms of a contribution to the international standardization for an evaluation method of food functionality with biomarkers developed by EU, as well as that for health claims regulatory system through the Codex mechanism.　In order to compete against the same trends in other countries, we have to collaborate strategically among governmental organizations which have a responsibility to the food regulation in cooperation with non-governmental sectors like ILSI, for example.

Taking the event of rice seeds this time into consideration, a perspective review is conducted on the present status of R&D on food functionality as well as a long history of desires from food industry for deregulation in health claims regulatory system on foods in Japan.