

Actions Of Heart Health Ingredients Including Fiber

7/8/2005- Phytosterols and [soluble fibers help protect against cardiovascular disease](#) in a different way from omega-3 fatty acids, according to a meta-analysis of research into the effects of bioactive ingredients used in functional foods for heart health, *reports Jess Halliday*.

Researchers at the University of São Paulo in Brazil scrutinized 159 studies and evaluated the effects of three bioactive substances – omega-3 fatty acids, soluble fibers and phytosterols – on plasma total cholesterol, triacylglycerol, LDL cholesterol, and HDL cholesterol.

They established that phytosterols and soluble fibers have a hypocholesterolemic effect. Omega-3 fatty acids, on the other hand, were seen to lower triacylglycerol but increase total, LDL and HDL cholesterol.

These findings are published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (vol. 82, no. 1, 32-40).

The researchers undertook the review of clinical studies on the ability of functional foods ingredients to lower the risk of heart disease because it judged the results of many of them to be contradictory.

Their conclusions could have a bearing on the formulation of functional foods, a relatively new but rapidly growing sector of the food industry in which heart health is a major driving force.

A report published by Leatherhead Food in April set the current value of the functional food heart health market at \$3.6 billion. It predicted that the number of heart health products on the market will increase by as much as 60 percent in the next five years.

According to the American Heart Association, 34.2 percent of Americans (70.1 million people) suffered from some form of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in 2002. CVD was the cause of 0.9 million deaths.

More than 50 percent of American adults had total cholesterol of 200 mg/dL or higher in 2002, and in 18.3 percent it was above 240ml/dL.

In moderate cases, health care professionals do now tend to recommend a dietary approach to controlling cholesterol over prescription drugs such as statins, which may have serious side effects.