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The need for a more rigorous pesticide evaluation process was one of the hot topics at a recent conference sponsored by the David Suzuki Foundation. For the story, see Page 10.

Soy isolate fights food poisoning

An extract from soybeans kills harmful bacteria, such as listeria and pseudomonas that cause food poisoning, says a University of Guelph researcher.

Suresh Neethirajan says it works better than the "synthetic-based, chemical-based anti-microbial agents (which) kill bacteria indiscriminately, whether they are pathogenic or beneficial."

The compounds in soybeans kill only the bad bacteria, Neethirajan said in a report by CBC radio.

Soybean derivatives are already used in a variety of products including canned foods, cooking oils, meat alternatives, cheeses, ice cream and baked goods.

Neethirajan, an engineering professor and director of the BioNano Laboratory at the university, said those with soy allergies need not worry about soy being used to prevent bacteria growth.

He said their method isolates the active component of the soybean from the protein that causes allergic reactions. The soy isoflavones that are chemically similar to estrogen are also weeded out.

What is left is a compound that naturally stops the bad bacteria.

"You do need good bacteria, beneficial bacteria, in our intestines to be able to properly process the food we eat, so that's why a lot of antibiotic food preservatives, which are made of synthetic chemicals, have ... side effects such as stomach cramps, diarrhea, bloating, gas," he said.

"Because of the selective specificity [by soy] towards inhibiting the pathogenic bacteria compared to beneficial bacteria, it will eliminate some of the health issues associated with the current synthetic-based food preservatives."

Neethirajan is now working to identify which varieties of soybeans are best at preventing bacteria from growing.

CCA promotes CETA in Europe

CCA President Dan Darling was in Brussels, Belgium last week accompanying International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland in promoting Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

The Minister's mission provided an opportunity to highlight the need to resolve important technical issues for Canada's beef exporters in order for the sector to realize the full potential of the deal's trade benefits.

With the quota access provided by CETA, Canadian beef exports to Europe could grow to $600 million a year from today's $10 million by eliminating tariffs for nearly 65,000 tonnes of Canadian beef a year, said Darling, who runs a cow-calf and backgrounding operation in Ontario

However, CCA is concerned Canada's ability to fill the beef export demand may be hindered by unresolved technical issues.

The most significant issue is the fact that the EU has not yet approved all of the procedures used in Canadian beef production to ensure food safety. For example, Canada reduces the potential presence of harmful bacteria in meat production by using antimicrobial carcass rinses.

The most commonly used antimicrobial rinses are lactic acid, citric acid, and peroxyacetic acid (PAA)-based solutions diluted in water. Europe has recently approved lactic acid and recycled hot water. Review of the scientific data on the efficacy of citric acid and PAA by European authorities will follow, but resolving such matters is critical to achieve genuine trade benefits.