

Nutraceuticals and Functional Foods: work in progress

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Over the years, consumers' awareness of the close relationship between food and health has increased. On the basis of this strong cultural drive, the attention towards the health and nutraceutical aspects of food has grown, thus becoming one of the most important criteria influencing consumers' purchasing choices and generating new market opportunities. Nutraceuticals, an innovative branch of pharmaceuticals, is aimed at this sector and in Italy it has increased to such an extent that it has become one of the European countries most attentive to these products. This new frontier can be an important driving force for socio-economic growth, both in terms of turnover and new professions. The research group has experience in the field of Food Chemistry and Food Technologies applied to the field of Nutraceuticals, Functional Foods and Food Technologies as well as in the field of Pharmaceutical Chemistry. It has expertise in design, prototyping, characterization, property protection and scientific communication of new ingredients, products and processes. The ongoing regional, national and European projects will be illustrated, which have intercepted food chains with high added value in terms of raw materials, candidate as functional foods or sources of nutraceuticals, of the Mediterranean basin such as extra virgin olive oil, wine, microgreens, cherries, carob and new productions such as the Giant Bamboo (*Pyllostachis Pubescens*). The multidisciplinary nature of the sector imposes the need to "look" at the food from different points of view that concern analytical-extractive, technological-formulative-engineering, nutrigenomic, as well as economic-legislative and communication skills. To this end, the Multidisciplinary Laboratory of Functional Food Chemistry and Technology uses internal human resources but also many collaborations at national and international level, with the aim of producing a "Farm to Fork" research useful to the health and medical sector and with a high TRL. The research team is specialized in the development and scale-up of processes based on emerging technologies (microwave, ultrasound) for the production of different types of molecules of industrial interest for the pharmaceutical, cosmetic, nutraceutical, food and green chemistry sectors. Finally, a special focus is given to emerging disciplines such as Precision Cooking and FOP (front of packages) labeling, links between nutraceuticals and precision nutrition, which will facilitate in the near future the precise determination of the diet for each individual, in relation to its biological, metabolic and genetic parameters.

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