

F-14

Beyond nutrition: the soy protein and the bio-actives

*Vidyadhar Kawalkar*, World Wellness Organization, Madhya Pradesh, India

The bioactives—phytochemicals which are the natural compounds of plant foods—soybean speak directly to our body chemistry with profound effects on our health. When bioactives enter our body they join our network of messenger molecules. The medicinal effects of soybean is mostly due to its bioactive components which exerts their action beyond nutritional benefits. In China health promoting foods are usually called medicinal foods. Hippocrates, the most celebrated Greek physician said “Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food.” Soybeans are the concentrated sources of isoflavones, weak phytoestrogens bind to oestrogen receptors and block the binding of more potent estrogens, indicating lower risk of breast cancer. In addition to possessing weak oestrogenic activity, genistein has been shown to inhibit protein-tyrosine kinase and to have antioxidant activity. Soybeans are rich sources of bioactives and their consumption including isoflavones may explain with several biological plabilities of decreasing the risk of chronic diseases and cancer and cardiovascular problems. These bioactives are capable of attacking and neutralizing the free radicals and offsetting their many pathogenic manifestations in the body. Natural edible antioxidant nutrients can effectively supplement the endogenous defences which add significantly to the anti freeradical forces. Consumption of soy helps in boosting the immune system and also brain health. The soybean is the most economical source of dietary protein in the world and is superior to other plant proteins and supplies material for the biochemical cycles.