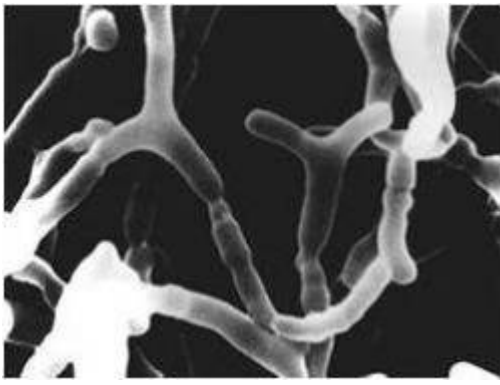


BACTERIA ALSO UNDERTAKE

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That slim and slim lady that appears in the photo attached is called Lactobacillus Bifidus, it is a bacterium and comes from a good family, specifically from the Lactobacilli family.

"His name sounds familiar to me, but I don't put a face to it"

Well, even if we don't put a face on it, the truth is that this lady has a close relationship with us: she lives in our gastrointestinal tract and helps us synthesize enzymes and vitamins, and also with the digestion of lactose. Of course, this lady likes the good life and clean, calm and new surroundings, which means that as we get older, problems start to stress us out and our diet worsens (which happens more or less when we left mom's house) this lady abandons us and the problems begin.

And what does your name mean to me?

Thanks to the power of publicity, everyone has heard of the Bifidus or one of their cousins. Many people may not know that they are bacteria or know what they are for, but everyone knows that Bifidus are those little bugs that they put in yogurt. Those little bugs are what differentiates ordinary yogurt from what we call a functional food. Functional foods are those that, in addition to their normal nutritional properties, provide us with additional benefits by adding, increasing the concentration, limiting or eliminating an ingredient, such as the bacteria that this article illustrates.

In addition to yogurt with bifidus, we also have other foods within this category of functional foods such as milk with omega-3 fatty acids, yogurt with calcium, fermented milk with probiotic bacteria, juices with vitamins, cereals with added fiber, bread with folic acid, eggs with omega-3, margarine with phytosterols or salt enriched with iodine.

The Strategy

And this does not end here. According to the OPTI report: ["Technological and Industrial Opportunities for the Development of the Spanish Economy 2010"](#), the future trends of the agri-food sector in Spain focus on four large groups: conservation and packaging technologies, biotechnology applied to the food chain, technologies for traceability, safety and chain management supply and personalized food.

Also the [Strategic Plan for Food Industry and Quality in the Basque Country 2008-2011](#) contemplates functional foods and nutraceuticals as one of the trends that are going to mark - are in fact marking - food research and the development of new technologies and production processes. And support for technology centers for the development of research programs aimed at creating food for the future is proposed as a strategic action.

Companies in the sector

In Spain there are 25,164 food companies (CNAE 10) of which 954 are located in the Basque Country. 49 companies in the country have 500 or more employees (14 of them have more than 1,000). In total there are 330,942 people employed in these companies.

The latest 2008 data from [INE](#) suggest that these companies have invested €228 M in I +D with 1,235 researchers. We also know that 24% of food, beverage and tobacco companies have carried out innovative activities, which shows a greater intensity of innovation than the average for the rest of the companies (17.8%).

Especially relevant is the impact of the introduction of new or significantly improved products. According to data from [the Spanish Federation of Food and Beverage Industries](#), the percentage of Turnover of companies in this sector derived from the introduction of new or improved products is 14.22%, above the average for companies (12.69%).

Of the 1,000 European companies with the highest investment in R&D, 40 belong to the food sector and only 2 of them ([Ebro-Puleva](#) and [Pescanova](#)) are Spanish.

The results

As of today, and according to data from [Spanish Patent and Trademark Office](#), between 2005 and March 2010, 1,434 patents have been published worldwide, related to functional foods, 36 of them Spanish property. Especially noteworthy are the Kuban State University of Technology in Russia with 68 patents and some well-known companies such as Suntory Ltd, Kaneka Corporation, Nestle, Unilever or Coca-Cola. In Spain, the University of Malaga, the CSIC and the Corporación Alimentaria Peñasanta S.A. take the cake in patents.

Functional foods as a business opportunity for the Basque industrial fabric

Although the Basque Country does not have a large industrial fabric in this sector (there is only one company with more than 1,000 employees and 3 with more than 500), there is a specific commitment to functional foods and very interesting research and development capacities. technology (in this sense it is worth highlighting the work of some technology centers such as [Leia](#) or [Azti](http://www.azti.es/)).

The growing demand for these foods by the market, the growing importance of health as a strategic bet for the future and the technological, scientific and business capacities that have been developed in recent years in food and health point to an opportunity for business development very attractive in the area of functional food that we should not miss. Hand in hand with the bifidus towards a new generation of companies.

There are no comments yet.