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Mysore to have India's first nutraceutical food park

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MYSORE: The educational hub will have India's first nutraceutical park where many of the locally available food sources will be subjected for scientific validation, which is crucial to promote India origin food sources.

A joint venture of the Karnataka government and the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), the facility will act as centre to develop and market novel food products. It will double up as an incubation centre for entrepreneurs to experiment their ideas. The Rs 42.9 crore project is partly funded by the CFTRI.

The food park will be based at the CFTRI's 90 acres facility at Maragowdanahalli in the city. The Centre, which has approved the project, was particular that the park should be set up in Mysore given that two of the world leaders dealing with food research are located in the city. The idea is to leverage the talent pool and technologies available here, CFTRI director Ram Rajasekharan said on Friday.

Nutraceuticals are products derived from food sources that supply additional health benefits besides providing basic nutritional value found in foods.

"We will act as an active partner to entrepreneurs for development and marketing novel food products. The idea is to promote locally available food sources by scientifically validating its medicinal value," he told reporters. Like for example, if we validate the therapeutic use of turmeric, something which we are using for centuries to heal fresh cuts, we can help an entrepreneur to develop a product like adhesive bandages using turmeric to heal the wound. The park will experiment in such novel projects, he said adding that it is India's first nutraceutical food park that CFTRI is setting up in Mysore.

B R Lokesh, the senior scientist who is working on the project, explained: "Scientific validation is key to promote Indian origin food sources. It is commonly known that turmeric has curative power. If we establish it scientifically, we can help our farmers get higher returns and also could introduce its benefits to greater audience." According to him, the CFTRI will also study effects of nutraceuticals on genetics.

The CFTRI announced that it has set up Lipidomics Centre in India (LIPICS) at its Bangalore facility, which plans to look at various mechanisms operating at the gene level

with regard to lipid production and digestion. It stated that the LIPICS is also taking up studies on plants like Ocimum (tulsi) to determine its effects on health. The CFTRI is also working to unravel the role of nutrition at molecular levels pointing out that deciphering the roles that different nutritional elements play at the molecular level helps to understand why nutritional elements behave differently in different circumstances and varies from person to person.

"We are also looking at development of high protein beverages from plants, which is aimed at providing sustainable process that supplement agricultural income as well as form sources of additional nutrition," Ram Rajasekharan explained.

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