Japan - Functional Foods & Ingredients Development

Japan is credited with inventing the term "functional foods" in the late 1980's. Japan was the first nation to legally define functional foods, and the Japanese functional food market is now one of the most advanced in the world. For those reasons, developments in Japan are often cited as indicative of emerging developments in Europe and the United States.

The Japanese government instituted an approval system for functional foods in 1991. The new system called FOSHU or Foods for Specific Health Uses was intended to help promote the manufacture of foods designed to remedy serious health problems such as inadequate fibre and calcium consumption within a regulatory framework that would curb misleading claims. In essence, Functional Foods are Foods that give an additional health benefit beyond nutrition.

A Functional Foods Research project was started first in 1984, under the sponsorship of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the concept for "tertiary function" had been proposed first. i.e. foods which are expected to contribute to disease prevention by modulating/modulation of physiological systems such as immune, endocrine, nervous, circulatory and digestive systems.