



Journal of Himalayan Life Sciences
Volume 1, Issue 1 (2021)

Functional foods from plants: a new perspective for healthy life

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Abstract: Food is the basic requirement of all living beings. Food is not just a source of energy and basic nutrition but also has health promoting role. Functional food is the food that provides health benefit beyond basic nutrition due to the presence of bioactive compounds. Phytochemicals are the most potent sources that can be exploited for the commercial production of functional food products. Polyphenols, carotenoids, phytosterols dietary, fibres, glucosinolates etc are some examples of phytochemicals with functional value. Scientific validation and verification of this claim of health benefit from various plants is required for their approval as functional food ingredient as well as industrial exploitation. The present paper reviews the phytochemicals that are potential candidates to be used as functional food ingredients. It also provides an overview of development of concept of functional food development and various definitions proposed by different organizations and authors. Future of the functional food industry depends upon their approval by regulatory organizations of each country for which scientific validation through clinical trials is necessary. Keeping in view this some clinical studies on the health promoting role of bioactive components of plants have also been mentioned.

Keywords: Functional foods, nutraceuticals, bioactive compounds, phytochemicals, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory.