



CBI
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CBI Product Factsheet:

Superfoods in Europe

Introduction

Many European consumers look for superfoods to live more healthily. Developing country producers can tap into that trend. The market offers opportunities for superfoods with a rich nutritional composition and those with possible health benefits. This is used in marketing, together with marketing stories on exotic origins, traditional use as nutrition and ethical production.

Product description

The term "superfood" is a marketing term, without a clear legal definition. Essentially, it is used to describe foods and food ingredients that are "nutrient-rich" or "nutrient-dense", or those that are believed to have health benefits. This rich nutritional composition includes high concentrations of vitamins, minerals, fibres, essential fatty acids, phytonutrients, or high levels of antioxidant activities. Superfoods cover a wide range of products, including fruits (so-called "superfruits"), vegetables, roots, herbs, grains, mushrooms and algae.

Box 1: How to use this Factsheet

- Learn how European consumers use food supplements for superfoods.
- Learn about the developing country species that are of greatest interest and most commonplace.
- Learn about requirements you need to meet for established and non-established species.
- Learn more about superfoods market segments and receive key insights into how to enter them.

Consumers are highly receptive to superfoods and superfruits: demand is soaring, even though scientific evidence for their purported health benefits is limited. Because of this lacking scientific proof, superfoods are subject to ongoing debates. The [European Food Information Council](#) questions the validity of the term superfood and stresses that consumers are better off ensuring a balanced intake of nutrients by increasing the diversity of nutritious foods in their diet.

Superfoods: inherently natural health products

No matter how you define superfoods, consumers expect them to be natural. They address a consumer need for healthy food products, which consumers equate to "natural" or even "unprocessed".

In food supplements, consumers use superfoods to complement a diet as part of a healthy lifestyle: to prevent illnesses. Under the term superfoods, they are not categorised as medical products. Some superfoods have a proven medical use, such as turmeric, but most do not. Therefore, the sole **focus of this factsheet is on the food supplement industry**. Food supplements based on superfoods are most often sold in the form of powders, followed by capsules/tablets.

Superfoods are marketed across a wide range of product categories. They include different types of berries (e.g. blueberries, pomegranate, goji berries), other fruits (e.g. camu camu, baobab), grains (e.g. quinoa, freekeh), algae (e.g. spirulina, chlorella), vegetables (e.g. kale, beetroot), herbs (e.g. Astragalus, turmeric, ginger, ashwagandha), bee products (e.g. bee pollen) and even fish (e.g. salmon) and dairy products such as quark.

Since this category is very broad, this factsheet considers only superfood (categories) where developing countries have most opportunities. The following plant parts are considered: herbs, fruits/berries, leaves, roots and seeds. It does not consider animal products, such as bee, fish and dairy products, nor vegetables and grains. The latter are mostly consumed as food rather than as a food supplement.

The table below gives an overview of common superfoods. Please note that this list is neither exhaustive nor conclusive.

Table 1: Common superfoods

Fruits/berries	Açai (<i>Euterpe oleracea</i>)	Camu camu (<i>Myrciaria dubia</i>)
	Mulberries (<i>Morus</i> spp.)	Baobab fruit powder (<i>Adansonia digitata</i>)
Roots	Maca (<i>Lepidium meyenii</i>) Rhodiola (<i>Rhodiola rosea</i>)	Ginseng (<i>Panax ginseng</i>) Ashwagandha (<i>Withania somnifera</i>)
Leaves	Moringa (<i>Moringa oleifera</i>)	Matcha tea (<i>Camellia sinensis</i>)
Seeds	Chia (<i>Salvia hispanica</i>)	
Herbs	Aloe vera, <i>Aloe barbadensis</i>	
Algae	Spirulina (<i>Arthrospira platensis</i>)	Chorella (<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>)

Exemplary species for developing country producers

Not all of the species mentioned above are equally relevant to exporters from developing countries. To illustrate: several fruits/berries are more commonly exported and used as dried fruits, not as supplements (e.g. mulberries); and other products mostly come from specific (non-developing) countries, for example matcha tea from Japan.

As there is such a wide range of superfoods available, specific species were selected per product category. Industry sources indicate that the following species have good potential: açai (*Euterpe oleracea*), maca (*Lepidium meyenii*), moringa (*Moringa oleifera*) and Aloe spp. (*Aloe vera* and *Aloe barbadensis*). These species offer opportunities to developing country exporters in areas with the right growing conditions, as will be explained in the sections below.

The table below provides information on exemplary superfood species, including available documentation and references, claims, origins and data on traditional use, clinical trials and filed patents¹.

Tips:

- If you want to enter the European market with new or established ingredients, please refer to the [CBI Module Buyer Requirements](#) for information and tips. Many other plants are used in energy products worldwide. Some of these can be/are already being used.
- Link up with local universities or laboratories to conduct thorough research and product development.
- Check databases such as [Herbmed](#) to identify research on traditional use, clinical trials (safety and efficacy evaluation of herbal formulations on people) and patents. In Europe, you can contact relevant universities such as the [University of Vienna](#), the [University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna](#) and the [University of Graz](#). Access scientific resources, for example through [Elsevier Science Direct](#) (not for free). Also consider becoming a member of the [Society for Medicinal Plant and Natural Product Research \(GA\)](#) to access the research of a wide network of resource personnel and their institutions.

¹ Information on traditional use, clinical trials and filed patents should be used as an indication only. Additional research for your specific species will be required.

Table 2: Selected key superfood species

Definition	Monographs for medicine ²	Permitted usage in supplements ³	Origin
<p>Euterpe oleracea (açai) Açai berries are marketed as superfruits for their high levels of antioxidant activities, calcium, vitamins and essential trace minerals.</p> <p>Berries are mostly exported in powder, frozen or pasteurised. On the European market, açai is mostly available as powder and in beverages (e.g. fruit juices and smoothies).</p>	<p>No WHO Monograph available No references available in Europe.</p> <p>No well-established use or traditional use of açai in herbal medicinal products has been documented.</p>	<p>BELFRIT, Italy: fruit and seed Germany: not included France, Belgium: fruit</p> <p>Food supplements cannot make a medicinal claim; exemplary claims (from the UK) for açai powder are: "fruits are high in vitamin A, calcium, monounsaturated fat and fibre and are a source of iron...vitamin A contributes to normal iron metabolism, while calcium supports normal blood clotting" "açai may help to support the health of your blood".</p>	<p>Cultivation and wild collection in South America (Amazon)</p> 
<p>Lepidium meyenii (maca) Maca is traditionally used in the central Andean region as a nutritive food, to support fertility, and to increase mental and physical energy. Nowadays it is also cultivated in China.</p> <p>Maca is mainly grown for its root. Powdered root and root extracts are used in Europe for the production of supplements and superfood powders sold in health shops and organic supermarkets.</p>	<p>No WHO Monograph⁴ available. No references available in Europe.</p> <p>No well-established use or traditional use of maca in herbal medicinal products has been documented.</p>	<p>Belgium, France, Italy and Germany: allow use of root (tuber) provided it does not contain alkaloids. Italy: allows use of root (tuber).</p> <p>Food supplements cannot make a medicinal claim; an exemplary claim (from the Netherlands) for supplements containing maca is: "Extra energy and to support mental well-being". From France: "...the composition of maca is rich. It contains 60-75% carbohydrates, 10-15% proteins, 8.5% fibre and 2.5% fats".</p>	<p>Andean region; cultivated in Peruvian and Bolivian Highlands, and in Brazil (small-scale). Cultivated in China</p> 
<p>Moringa oleifera (moringa) Moringa leaves are traditionally used for nutrition. They are high for their vitamin content (A, B and C), their mineral content and have high antioxidant activities.</p> <p>In Europe, moringa leaves are used in powdered form and tablets, and in teas or energy drinks.</p>	<p>No WHO Monograph available. No references available in Europe.</p> <p>No well-established use or traditional use of moringa in herbal medicinal products has been documented.</p>	<p>BELFRIT: whole plant Germany, France, Belgium: not included Italy: seed and oil</p> <p>Food supplements cannot make a medicinal claim; exemplary claims (from Germany) made for moringa powder are: "Moringa oleifera...is often called 'miracle tree' in his home...It contains vitamins, minerals and trace elements". "The all-rounder: rich in vital substances, high fibre, high protein content"</p>	<p>Native to Himalayan foothills (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal) but naturalised in many parts of Africa</p> 
<p>Aloe spp (Aloe barbadensis, A. vera) Also commonly used in cosmetics and as digestive health supplements, aloe vera leaves and gel/juice are also marketed as superfood for the content of vitamins (A, C and E), minerals, antioxidants, amino acids, fibres and enzymes.</p>	<p>WHO Monograph for Aloe (Aloe vera or A. ferox) and Aloe vera gel ESCOP Monograph 2nd edition (Aloe capensis) and supplement (Aloe barbadensis) European Pharmacopoeia monographs: # 259 Aloes dry extract # 258 Aloe capensis # 257 Aloe barbadensis</p>	<p>BELFRIT: leaf Germany, Italy: juice and gel from leaves France: leaves, gel and juice, with warning advising against use by children under 12 years old, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and long term use. Belgium: leaves, gel and juice</p> <p>Food supplements cannot make a medicinal claim; exemplary claims</p>	<p>Aloe vera is widely cultivated and naturalised; it can be found in Europe, North and South America, the Middle East, China, India, Pakistan and Australia.</p>

² Only European Pharmacopoeia monographs (legally binding), Community Monographs (non-binding) and entries (binding) are valid in the EU. WHO monographs provide information on the uses to which herbs are put in medicine systems outside of Europe, including information on growing conditions, purity tests, chemical constituents and an overview of a botanical's specific action. ESCOP monographs provide a basis for EMA dossiers on herbal medicinal products. They are a reference standard (not legally binding).

³ Indication only. This information is unavailable in many countries, but it is expected to be comparable.

<p>As food supplements, aloe vera is available on the European market in the form of tablets/capsules, and as a health drink (juice).</p>	<p>Final Community Herbal Monograph</p> <p>No traditional use of aloe vera in herbal medicinal products has been documented.</p> <p>As a traditional herbal medicinal product, claims may include use for "short-term use in cases of occasional constipation".</p>	<p>(from the UK) made for supplements containing aloe vera are: "The leaf contains active enzymes to help break down and dissolve foods. The yellow gel contained inside the leaf has been used for thousands of years."</p>	
---	---	---	---

Sources: [ESCOP](#), [EDQM](#), [EMA](#), national food regulators

What is the demand for superfoods in Europe?

Specific market data for superfoods in Europe do not exist, due to the lack of an exact definition and the great range of products involved. Demand can be estimated using other indications, i.e. with regard to food products, food supplements and sales/exports of specific superfoods.

- Superfoods are increasingly popular according to industry sources. Trade fairs, such as BioFach 2015 in Germany, are communicating more strongly about superfoods than in previous years.
- Superfoods fit in with the trend among European consumers to improve their health with food or drink, a strategy for 56% of European consumers ([NutraceuticalsWorld, 2014](#)). This trend is stronger among women than men (60% vs. 51%). This trend has also resulted in growing demand for functional foods, which are expected to grow 25% from 2013 to 2017 ([Nutraingredients, 2014](#)).
- The UK is an especially strong market for superfoods; 61% of UK consumers have bought a food because it was marketed as a superfood ([The Guardian, 2014](#)).
- Demand for **food supplements** is strongest in the UK, Germany, France and Italy. Strongest growth in these segments stems from Eastern European countries, such as Poland, Romania and Slovakia.
- Food supplements aimed at general health have a particularly high market share in Germany (20%), the UK (14%) and Italy (12%). Manufacturers also often market superfoods in this segment.

Superfood examples

- Sales increases for specific superfoods give an indication of the huge influence the term has on consumers and companies. Take the vegetable **beetroot** for example. Over the course of one year, the five largest UK supermarkets increased the number of products containing beetroots as a key ingredient by 20% ([Express, 2015](#)). This growth stemmed from the superfood status the old-fashioned beetroot received when tests showed a positive influence on athletic performances and blood pressure.
- Peruvian exports of superfoods **maca** and **camu camu** to Europe increased substantially from 2010 to 2014 ([Siicex, 2015](#)). The main 2014 European importers of these superfoods were Germany and the UK. Exports of maca to these countries increased by 40-50% annually, while exports of camu camu increased by 75% (UK) and 95% (Germany) annually.

Tips:

- Check the Sistema Integrado de Información de Comercio Exterior ([Siicex](#)), for more information on Peruvian exports of superfoods.
- In your exports, target West European countries, as demand for superfoods is highest in those countries.
- Please refer to [CBI Trade Statistics for Natural Ingredients for Health Products](#) for statistics on European markets for herbal medicinal products and food supplements.
- For more information on sector associations in various European countries, please refer to the sources and promising countries (France, Germany, Italy and the UK) on the [CBI Natural Ingredients for Health Products website](#).

What trends offer opportunities on the European market for superfoods?

Superfoods

Are a trend in and of themselves. This trend has spread from the food industry to food supplements. The popularity of superfoods is the product of several trends:

- The main cause of superfoods' popularity is the growing **consumer awareness of health** and prevention of illnesses. Consumers are more conscious of their health and aim to improve it with healthy lifestyles and diets. Superfoods accommodate this need. Be aware that EU legislation does not allow companies to use the term 'superfood' on a label unless it is part of a brand name.
- Moreover, superfoods are also helped by consumer demands for **clean labelling** and **natural ingredients**. Consumers are increasingly concerned about what they eat: they want to know and understand the ingredients used and are sceptical towards the safety of synthetic food additives and processed ingredients.
- The **convenience** that superfood food supplements in powder offer is a big drive in the industry.

Tips:

- Be very careful how you label your superfood.
- Determine if you can accompany your product with a nutrition claim. Nutrition claims are claims that a food has particular beneficial nutritional properties because of its energy or nutrients/other substances.
- Also do not make health claims for food supplement ingredients if such claims have not been authorised by the European Commission. Regarding botanicals, no health claims have yet been assessed, but this is expected to happen in the future. You need to take this into account in your own documentation and marketing (materials). For an overview of health and nutrition claims, check the [EU Register on nutrition and health claims](#).

“What’s the new superfood?”

Is constantly on the minds of manufacturers and consumers. Consumers want to know what the new superfood is and manufacturers use these superfoods to differentiate their products, company or brand on the market. Superfoods which are in fashion at one time can be replaced by other superfoods soon after. For example, the berry açai was all the rage several years ago, but the market has since stabilised, as companies try to find a new ingredient for a new marketing campaign.

Which elements make for an interesting new superfood?

- First and foremost, superfoods need a nutritious and beneficial **chemical composition**, for example in terms of high vitamin content or high levels of antioxidant activities. When you can link a superfood's composition to specific health benefits in clinical trials, it becomes easier to spark interest among European companies.
- European companies use superfoods' **exotic origin** to build marketing stories. Compelling origins are those with a high degree of biodiversity. Currently superfoods from South America and southern Africa are very popular.
- There is an interest in superfoods that have **traditionally** been eaten as a source for nutrients. Especially those products that can trace their use back in history and in specific cultures are of interest.
- Consumer interest in **ethically produced** superfoods is growing, particularly in terms of organic production. Organic production and certification of superfoods fits in with the healthy image of these food supplements and powders.

Tips:

- Find out if your new superfood needs to go through Novel Food registration, which can be an obstacle to enter the market. For more information, refer to the [CBI Module Buyer Requirements for Health Products](#). This module details a route to market with new ingredients for food supplements.
- Determine the chemical composition of new superfood species, as food supplement companies use this information in their marketing or as a basis for nutrition claims.
- Focus on the origin, tradition of cultivation or collection in your marketing of superfoods.
- Refer to the section on [Competition](#) for tips on how to diversify the risk of changing superfood fashions and for more information on value addition through certifications.
- Please refer to [CBI Trends](#) for more market trends.

What requirements should superfoods comply with to be allowed on the European market?

This factsheet considers the food supplement industry only. It does not include requirements for herbal medicinal products, although certain products marketed as superfoods are also used in herbal medicine (but not marketed as such). The [Module Buyer Requirements](#) explains the distinct legislative frameworks and route to market of herbal medicinal products and food supplements.

What requirements do I need to comply with to export natural ingredients?

- You need to comply with the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**. CITES regulates the trade in (for example) wild-collected endangered plants and provides guidance on the species for which trade is prohibited or restricted.
- You might need to establish **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)** agreements. These 'mutually agreed terms' detail the terms and conditions of access and use of genetic resources and/or traditional knowledge and supply of raw materials.
- You need to ensure **sustainable sourcing** of your ingredients. This is important to buyers, as they are facing supply shortages for an ever-increasing number of cultivated, but especially wild-collected species. You do not always have to certify sustainable sourcing; have a look at these value-addition opportunities in the section [Competition](#).

Tips:

- Conduct a resource assessment and implement a resource management system.
- If you are an exporter of wild-collected botanicals or their derivatives, take into account the provisions of [CITES](#) in order to guarantee the EU entry of your products. Check [Annex A and B of Regulation \(EC\) No 338/97](#) to ascertain whether import and export permits are required for your product. You can also contact the [local CITES authority](#).
- Read more about [CITES](#) in the EU Export Helpdesk.
- Put a procedure in place to check whether ABS applies. Contact the competent authorities in your country as a starting point. [UEBT](#) and [FairWild](#) provide thorough information on the practical implications of ABS, as established by the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#).

What requirements do I need to comply with to enter the EU market for food supplements?

EU legislation specific to food supplements:

In addition to general requirements for food, as established under General Food law, food supplements are subject to specific legislation. This legislation lays down compositional and labelling requirements, but still leaves composition beyond minerals and vitamins (e.g. essential fatty acids, fibre and various plants and herbal extracts) at the discretion of national authorities.

The term "superfood" cannot be used on the label of food products and food supplements in Europe. To get around this ban, European companies instead make the term part of their brand name, e.g. the company [Your Superfoods](#), or the sub-brand [Neal's Yard Remedies – Superfoods & Antioxidants](#).

Tips:

- Familiarise yourself with the legislation on food supplements, which is listed on the [website of the European Commission](#).
- Make sure that your ingredients comply with [general requirements for food](#) and food labelling. Buyers usually demand compliance with guidelines for herbs or fruits according to [Codex Alimentarius](#).
- Check the positive lists of European countries to determine whether your superfood is already allowed in those markets or whether there are species that you could potentially produce in your country. You can find such lists at:
 - [German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture](#)
 - [Italian Ministry of Health](#) (BELFRIT list for Belgium, France and Italy).

Food safety:

Ingredients for food supplements need to comply with requirements for food safety. You can read more about food safety and Novel Food requirements on the websites of the [EU Export Helpdesk](#) and the [European Commission](#).

Tips:

- [Novel Food Regulation](#): Consumer safety of ingredients that were not consumed within the EU before 15 May 1997 needs to be assured to comply with this regulation. Consult experts and internet research for insights into whether there is historic use in Europe. The (non-exhaustive) [Novel Food Catalogue](#) lists plants subject to the Novel Food Regulation and provides their current status.
- [Maximum Residue Levels \(MRLs\)](#): strict control of pesticide use must be a focal point in your production system. These controls are increasingly strict, as improving laboratories can detect more residues.
- Criteria and maximum levels of [contaminants in food](#) and [microbiological contamination of food](#): Apply GACP/GAP and GMP to minimise and document contamination.
- [Hygiene of food \(HACCP\)](#): legally binding for food processors (including ingredients) and recommended for farmers (primary production).
- Find out which [extraction solvents for food](#) you can use and under which conditions.
- [Irradiation of food](#) is only permitted in specific cases for spices and herbs, including supplements.
- [Traceability](#) is based on the “one step back-one step forward” principle; you need to trace food that is used for consumption through the value chain
- Be ready to demonstrate traceability by documenting your value chain. If you want to have your product certified (e.g. FairWild, Fairtrade or organic), traceability will be important as well.
- Moreover, have a look at common causes for border rejection and product withdrawals on the [Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed \(RASFF\)](#). Examples include contaminants and unauthorised food ingredients.
- Check and adhere to the food safety legislation in your country.

What additional requirements do buyers often have?**Buyer specifications and requirements:**

Many buyers have additional quality requirements which can go beyond legislation and standards (active ingredient content, moisture content, contaminants, residues, etc.). These are established in buyer specifications. To show that you meet their specifications, they also require well-structured company and product information, including detailed technical data sheets.

Tips:

- Make sure you meet international product standards and buyer specifications.
- Include plant identification through a national and/or a company herbarium in your product specifications; this is important as a reference.
- Prevent (un-)intended adulteration and contamination by other foreign materials by keeping facilities and equipment clean, and by ensuring full documentation and traceability.
- If you produce extracts, you need to meet buyer requirements in terms of extraction methods, solvent use, preservatives, etc. Validate and document extraction conditions: processing aids, temperature, pressure/vacuum, flow rate, etc.
- If you use preservatives, make sure you have the HR capacity to tailor their use to buyer specifications and for their proper documentation. You also need specialist staff to monitor process quality and microbiology.
- Make sure your documentation and labelling comply with the respective legislation and buyer requirements. Information on possible dangerous characteristics of chemical substances must be provided on Material Safety Data Sheets. Furthermore, it is likely that your buyer requires test reports.
- Implementing and documenting Standard Operating Procedures can provide a lot of trust on the part of buyers that you will keep up quality standards.

What are the standards and requirements for niche markets?

Social and environmental sustainability:

- If you want to market **organic ingredients** in the EU, you need to comply with EU requirements on the production and labelling of organic products of agricultural origin. This is highly relevant for superfoods.
- Verifying and/or certifying **sustainable production** represents a niche market, but can add value to your product. For more information on such value addition, please refer to value-addition opportunities in the section [Competition](#). Sustainability standards include:
 - The [UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative BioTrade Principles and Criteria](#) or [FairWild](#) Principles and Criteria
 - Social: Fair Trade certification, such as [FLO Fairtrade](#) or [FairForLife](#).
- Some EU buyers expect you to comply with their supplier **codes of conduct** regarding **social responsibility**, which are often based on ILO labour standards or on UN Global Compact reporting.

Tips:

- Discuss with (potential) buyers whether they are interested in certified sustainable superfoods of the above standards.
- If you choose to obtain a certificate for organic production, find out more about [Organic production and labelling](#).
- Dedicate the processing plant to the exclusive production of organic ingredients. If this is not possible, ensure thorough cleansing of machinery and equipment at all times.
- Consult the [Standards Map database](#) for different sustainability and organic standards.
- For more information on responsible business practices, refer to the [UN Global Compact](#) and ISO 26000 as guidance, and use the [SEDEX](#) online database, where members can share information on ethical and responsible practices. You can also use SEDEX to prepare for possible audits/questions from your buyers.

Quality and food safety management:

In addition to the mandatory HACCP standard, EU food industries increasingly demand compliance with more comprehensive food safety standards (food safety management systems), as well as quality safety management as specified in [ISO 9001:2008](#) (required for health ingredients). This mostly concerns large retailers and (private label) manufacturers, most notably for food supplements. Examples include the [International Food Standard \(IFS\)](#), [ISO 22000](#) (food safety) and [ISO 31.000](#) (risk management).

Tips:

- Consider carefully whether to comply with the above standards and certifications. Verify whether your buyer truly demands compliance, whether compliance will facilitate market access or offer you a better price or whether compliance will benefit your company's supply security or internal processes. In the case of food safety standards, it is also important to ascertain whether you can gain your buyer's trust in another way.
- Stay up to date with information on food safety standards by checking news items published on the [Codex Alimentarius](#) and [HACCEUROPA](#) websites.
- Check product standards ([Codex Alimentarius](#), UNECE for [fresh fruit and vegetables](#); and [dry and dried products](#)) for product specific requirements.

What competition do I face on the European market for superfoods?

Natural alternatives

The main competition for superfoods comes from other superfoods, both for consumption as a food supplement or powder and for consumption as fresh or processed food products in a healthy diet.

The superfoods market in Europe is very competitive and relies on innovations in terms of new superfoods or new products with superfoods. Fashions for superfoods are changing each year. Many are usually in fashion for two to three years. For some, consumption drops while for others consumption stabilises or increases at a slower pace. As a result, reaching a consistent supply is problematic according to industry sources. European companies need to balance investments with potential sales and communicate this to suppliers.

Fresh and processed food products containing superfoods also form a source of competition. Along with food supplements and powders, superfoods are used in all types of processed food products, from breakfast cereals, bakery products and bars to juices and dairy products.

Other competitive sources include:

- Probiotics and prebiotics compete with superfoods. Although they are marketed to support digestive health, they can also be used to improve overall health and, as such, compete with superfoods. A strong competitive advantage of probiotics is that they are commonly consumed as part of fermented drinks with specially added active live cultures, such as in yoghurt (drinks), instead of in the form of tablets or powders.
- Natural immune supporting food supplements also compete with superfoods as they have a function that is comparable to that of superfoods: to improve overall health.

Tips:

- Diversify your product portfolio to account for changing fads in superfoods. This will make you less vulnerable to market changes. You can diversify your portfolio by broadening your product portfolio or by supplying a combination of superfoods with other food (supplement) ingredients.
- Stay up to date with developments in superfoods by checking the websites of trade fairs, e.g. [Biofach](#) or [Vitafoods](#), and the trade press, e.g. [Nutraceuticals world](#) or [Nutraingredients](#). For more information sources, refer to the [Useful Sources](#) of this product factsheet.
- Help manufacturers build their marketing story by documenting and visualising your company and superfoods' unique value proposition. This will also contribute towards your own marketing effort. Final manufacturers can use this information to market the end-product in Europe.
- For more information on immune support food supplements, please refer to the [CBI Product Factsheet Immune System Products in Europe](#).

Synthetic alternatives

Technically, there are no synthetic alternatives to superfoods, as synthetics would not fit the image and concept of superfoods (natural and healthy). However, there are of course synthetic alternatives to the function of superfoods, to prevent illnesses. As such, the main synthetic alternatives are **vitamins and minerals**.

Many vitamin products on the market are synthetic, but products based on plant-derived vitamins, or products made up of high-vitamin plant materials (fruits, but also botanicals), are also available on the market. Synthetic vitamins are cheaper to make and usually more stable. This means that they can have a shelf-life of months or years, they can be added to foods in higher dosages and they allow manufacturers to create smaller tablets.

Tips:

- If your product is high in vitamins, stress in your documentation that it is a more natural option to take vitamins contained within plant materials.
- Please refer to [CBI Competition](#) and CBI Top 10 Tips for doing business for more information.

Value-adding opportunities when competing in the market

Adding value can be a way to create a distinct profile for yourself in the market and to make your product more attractive to buyers. You can add value with further processing (e.g. from raw material to extract to final product):

- Opportunities to **add value to raw materials** are often not fully exploited; proper post-harvest processing (sorting, grading) and proper documentation can lead to you obtaining a higher price or more trust from your buyer.
- Developing country producers are moving **beyond raw material** towards the export of extracts. Processing raw materials into essential oils is guided by the existence of standards, and buyer demands are well understood. In contrast, it is more difficult to come to a common understanding on quality in the case of many herbal extracts. With that in mind, many EU buyers prefer to import raw materials, even if their suppliers would prefer to export extracts to Europe.
- Since superfoods are commonly marketed as powders, producing **final products** for the EU market may be feasible in developing countries. This will require a strong product development and marketing team and budget.

Tips:

- Align quality adjustments and improvements to your product with buyers' requirements (specifications) and their willingness to pay for them. Quality improvements can be costly, and you need to ensure that the potential exists for getting an adequate return on your investments.
- Determine your option to market simple finished products such as superfood powders. Take costs into consideration for product development, market authorisation and marketing.
- Set aside a sufficient marketing budget, which is of vital importance in the superfood sector, as it is highly competitive. Without a strong promotion effort in the market, final (branded) product manufacturers have few opportunities on the EU market. Look at European companies for marketing examples, e.g. [Royal Green](#) (the Netherlands), [VegaVital](#) (Germany) and [Naturya](#) (the UK).

Certifying your superfood as organic, or according to social and environmental sustainability principles, may allow you to add value to your product:

- In **food supplements** the value of certification depends on the positioning of the producer and product. For food-type products such as superfoods, opportunities for certification are higher than for medicinal-type products. In addition, producers with a company image focused on sustainability (ethical/environmental) place more value on certification of the ingredients in their food supplements.

Tip:

- Verify your buyers' interest in certified ingredients:
 - Along with responding to consumer interest in organic certified superfoods, organic certification also acts as a quality control system and can help to improve your quality image.
 - Fair Trade and FairWild certification can help indicate to your buyer that the production of ingredients is generating rural income and does not harm local communities (this could jeopardise the buyer's image).
 - Certification demonstrating sustainable sourcing (e.g. FairWild) can help show potential buyers that you could be a reliable future partner.

What do the trade channels and interesting market segments look like in Europe for superfoods?

Market channels

Overall, European traders/processors are the most important players to consider approaching. The European market for superfoods is made up of manufacturers specialised in (often a limited range of) superfoods and those selling a wider range of health products. Trade relations for established superfoods focus on maximising supply security and reducing costs. By contrast, new ingredients call more strongly for collaboration and quick upscaling.

Market segments

Many food supplements, powders and fresh food products are on the European market. As a vibrant area of product development, companies add new ingredients which are unfamiliar as supplements in Europe, but also “re-invent” more commonly known ingredients (e.g. turmeric and ginger). In general, the UK and France are more vibrant in terms of product introductions than Germany or Italy.

Margins are low for established products. Manufacturers are keen to source new ingredients in order to create a distinct profile for themselves in the market and to improve margins.

Tips:

- Look at local practice: what do local people use/eat to stay healthy? Which plants (or their parts) do they eat and for which health benefits? Build up files on traditional use, support this with clinical tests, especially in terms of chemical composition. Such information can be used to approach European traders, ingredient processors and manufacturers.
- If you supply a new superfood, look for a partner in Europe to help build the marketing story and business. Find a company which is interested and sees potential for the new ingredient.
- For tips on finding buyers, have a look at the CBI Module Finding Buyers. Use your knowledge of product development activity and potential for marketing your product more specifically to the right buyer.
- Please refer to [CBI Market Channels and Segments](#), where the various players at the various levels of the value chain are discussed in more depth. This module also contains an overview of the key market characteristics and trends for food supplements.

Useful sources

Visiting and, above all, participating in trade fairs is highly recommended as one of the most efficient methods of testing market receptiveness, obtaining market information and finding prospective business partners. The most relevant trade fairs in Europe for exporters of natural health ingredients are:

- [SANA](#) in Bologna, Italy
- [Hi/Ni](#) (Health ingredients/Natural ingredients): Travelling trade fair
- [Fi/Ni](#) (Food ingredients/Natural ingredients): Travelling trade fair
- [Biofach](#) in Nuremberg, Germany (for organic producers)
- [Vitafoods](#) in Geneva, Switzerland
- [CPHI](#) is more focused on the pharmaceutical market, but larger natural extract companies also exhibit at this fair in a dedicated natural extracts zone.
- [Anuga](#) in Cologne, Germany, is a food and beverages fair but now also has a dedicated “Wellfood” department, including food supplements, functional food and medicine.

Trade press/news

- [Nutra Ingredients](#): News on supplements and nutrition in Europe.
- [Foodnavigator](#): Science and nutrition research, product news, newsletter, health and nutritional ingredients.
- [Nutraceuticals World](#): News, buyers’ guide on various herbs and botanicals, knowledge centre and market, peer-reviewed and supplier research.
- [Nutraceuticals Now \(summer issue 2015\)](#) technical review on functional products and ingredients which are defined as disease preventing and/or health promoting in addition to nutritional value.

More information

CBI market information: Promising EU export markets.

EU Expanding Exports Helpdesk - <http://exporthelp.europa.eu>.

Eurostat - <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/newxtweb> - statistical database of the EU. Several queries are possible. For trade, choose ‘EU27 Trade Since 1995 By CN8’.

International Trade Statistics - <http://www.trademap.org> - you have to register



CBI Market Intelligence

P.O. Box 93144
2509 AC The Hague
The Netherlands

www.cbi.eu/market-information

marketintel@cbi.eu

This survey was compiled for CBI by ProFound. Advisers In Development
in collaboration with CBI sector expert Klaus Duerbeck.

Disclaimer CBI market information tools: <http://www.cbi.eu/disclaimer>

November 2015