Mannatech gets Lonza arabinogalactan deal

By Clarisse Douaud

9/27/2006 - Mannatech has entered into an exclusive ten-year arrangement with Swiss biotech Lonza for the worldwide distribution and marketing of dietary fiber arabinogalactan harvested from the American larch tree.

In May Lonza purchased the ingredient rights from US firm Larex to expand its nutrition portfolio. The agreement aligns supplement manufacturer Mannatech as the only company allowed to purchase the fiber, arabinogalactan, from Lonza for use in its flagship plant saccharides product, Ambrotose.

The deal highlights the importance manufacturers are placing on natural ingredients to uphold their products as Mannatech builds its glyconutritional portfolio.

"The agreement further protects the ingredients in our top nutritional supplement, Ambrotose," said Mannatech CEO Sam Caster.

Mannatech specializes in glyconutrients - plant saccharides that provide support for the immune system. Saccharides are necessary for the body’s creation of key structures in cell interaction called glycoforms.

The agreement stipulates Mannatech will be the only company allowed to purchase arabinogalactan from Lonza when it is to be used in nutritional supplements containing any two of the following ingredients: naturally derived gums and resins, aloe extract, algal extract or glucosamine. All these ingredients are found in Mannatech’s proprietary Ambrotose complex.

According to Mannatech, arabinogalactan derived from the American larch exists in much higher concentrations than the protein-bound arabinogalactan found in many other plants. Arabinogalactan can be extracted from the cell lumen in its natural state by soaking the wood chips in water. Lonza’s patented process uses only steam and water to extract arabinogalactan from larch.

The soluble, tasteless and odourless prebiotic fibre can be added to food and beverage products to boost their fibre content.

It is said to have a beneficial effect on the gastrointestinal system, slowly fermenting to increase beneficial microflora like lactobacilli and bifidobacteria and decrease endogenous pathogenic bacteria.

Lonza claims to be the only firm harvesting the soluble and odorless fiber from the American larch.

Historically, Native Americans used the larch tree's resin, leaves and bark for medicinal food and cosmetic applications. Some tribes used tea made from the tree's bark for as a laxative, tonic and diuretic. Others used the bark and resin to wash wounds, to bathe children to make them strong or as an infusion for colds and tuberculosis.