

Breaking News on Food & Beverage Development - North America

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Martin Bauer launches prickly pear for diabetes

By Clarisse Douaud

12/4/2007- **Martin Bauer North America has launched Opundia, a line of proprietary prickly pear cactus extracts to support healthy blood glucose levels.**

The extract of the pads and fruit of the *opuntia ficus-indica* cactus, consumed regularly in Mexico, has been linked to reducing blood glucose levels by as much as 50 percent.

The market potential is no doubt significant - if the line is effectively marketed for use in dietary supplements, functional foods and beverages - given the amount of people affected by diabetes.

"Using Opundia extract to help maintain healthy blood glucose levels in conjunction with a proper diet and exercise could be a valuable tool for the hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide who need to care about their blood sugar," said Stefan Wypyszyk, vice president of marketing with Martin Bauer (MB) North America.

In the US alone, over 20 million people suffer from diabetes, equivalent to seven percent of the population.

A study published this year in the journal *Diabetes Care* found that consumption of prickly pear cactus pads could reduce blood sugar rises after a meal by up to 50 percent.

The study investigated the effect of the cactus pear on blood sugar levels when eaten with traditional Mexican dishes such as burritos and quesadillas.

Researchers from the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California in Mexico recruited 36 volunteers with type-2 diabetes aged between 47 and 72. They reported that blood sugar levels were reduced in all meal types when the cactus pears were consumed simultaneously.

MB North America said its Opundia extract is currently the subject of a 16-week, double blind, randomized, placebo-controlled clinical study being conducted by a US university to determine its ability to support healthy blood glucose levels in humans.

In the meantime, as part of the Opundia line, the company has launched a fresh fruit puree made from the pears. It says this can be used by functional food manufacturers as a potent, antioxidant-rich way to deliver the potential benefits of the fruit.

"Our Opundia extract offers manufacturers an ingredient for their glucose health products that is supported by modern-day science, as well as centuries of historical use," said Wypyszyk.

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