

License granted for new DHA microalgae process

14/04/2006 - **The European inventors of a process for deriving higher yields of DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) from microalgae have licensed the patent to Advanced BioNutrition - a deal that could ultimately impact the human nutrition market for DHA.**

The exclusive worldwide license allows the company to use the oil resulting from the process in whatever market it chooses. [ABN](#)'s core business in animal nutrition, so this will be the first area of development.

However a spokesperson for the company told NutraIngredients-USA.com that it would *"absolutely"* consider a sub-license to allow another company to take the oil into human nutrition.

The fermentation process using the [microalgae](#) *Crypthecodinium cohnii* was invented by scientists at the University of Hull in the UK and Wageningen University's Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group (AFSG), The Netherlands.

They were granted patents to the process in both the US and the UK last year.

Dr Lolke Sijtsma of AFSG, one of the scientists who collaborated on the project, explained that the higher yield is due to the use of acetic acid in place of glucose as the carbon source.

According to published data, the yield could be increased by a factor of three.

ABN's main counterpart in the human field is [Martek](#) Biosciences, like ABN based in Columbia, MD; it holds a clutch of patents in this area and also uses *C. cohnii*, as well as some other microalgae.

Martek has indicated that it is in discussions with major food companies to incorporate it into consumer products.

Last year it tweaked its production process so it could supply [DHA](#) at a lower cost - a move that was expected to make the ingredient more attractive for companies investigating its use in foods.

Moreover, Martek claims that its DHA and ARA are in 80% of US infant formulas. Licensees include Mead Johnson, Wyeth, Abbott Laboratories and Nestle.

The best source of DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid, has traditionally been fish oil. Consumer interest in omega-3 has skyrocketed in the last couple of years, largely thanks to positive research results supporting its health, especially in heart health, cognitive function and infant and maternal health. Martek markets its product on the basis of its vegetarian origin. Other vegetarian sources such as flax oil are considerably less bioavailable.