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## Rooibos can fight cancer, says South African group

By Shane Starling, 03-Aug-2009

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### South African food maker, Fair Cape, has won official cancer-fighting recognition for a yoghurt fortified with an extract from the native South African Rooibos plant.

As part of a Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) campaign to increase dietary knowledge among the South African population, it authorised Fair Cape to use its Smart Choice emblem on its Free Range Rooibos Yoghurts, after eight years of research and more than one million Rand spent.

"CANSA is officially recognising Rooibos as a source of chemicals that can help to prevent cancer in both humans and animals," said CANSA head of research, Dr Carl Albrecht.

CANSA said the Smart Choice emblem was only issued to those "suppliers who comply with a strict set of criteria" that included being additive and hormone-free and produced in an environmentally friendly way that includes the use of recyclable and biodegradable plastic.

The supplier of the Rooibos extract to Fair Cape is Rooibos Ltd.

#### Measures and actions

"CANSA recognises Fair Cape Free Range Rooibos Yoghurts as a Smart Choice, mainly because it contains the equivalent Rooibos extract of one cup of tea and is a high-standard yoghurt," CANSA said, noting quality control measures had also been important.

"CANSA is keen to see that the Rooibos extract used in the yoghurt is 100 per cent natural and standardised. Sophisticated analytical tests have been put in place to ensure this," the group said.

It said the Smart Choice scheme rewarded products that used natural ingredients in preference to artificial products, some of which, "have been shown to increase the risk of cancer".

"Owing to the sensitivities around preservatives, this yoghurt contains a natural, state-of-the-art polypeptide preservative that is readily digested in the gut and does not get absorbed by the blood," CANSA said.

"CANSA also recognises the high concentration of probiotic bacteria in the yoghurt and is aware of growing research suggesting that these bacteria could reduce cancer risk. It furthermore increases immune cell activity in the gut and suppresses the growth of bacteria that could convert procarcinogens into carcinogens (cancer-causing chemicals)."

The extract is thought to be effective in cancer treatment because it replenishes glutathione, an antioxidant produced in the body that decreases with age.

"CANSA research has found that Rooibos raised the ratio of reduced glutathione to oxidised glutathione by 100 per cent in humans who consumed six cups a day over a period of three months," said Dr Albrecht.

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