

**Dr Muhammed Majeed,**  
Founder & Chairman, Sami /  
Sabinsa Group (seated) and  
**Shaheen Majeed,** Marketing  
Director, Sabinsa Corporation

**H**ealth Canada, the Federal department that regulates products that help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health, has approved Sabinsa Corporation's shelf-stable probiotic LactoSpore ingredient for sale in Canada. Although LactoSpore has been on the market for over 20 years, emerging clinical evidence on LactoSpore has moved the focus beyond maintaining levels of healthy intestinal bacteria into sports nutrition, IBS and related gut health conditions.

Since obtaining Generally Recognised As Safe (GRAS) status in the US five years ago, LactoSpore's market reach has grown tremendously to include a variety of foods, beverages, chocolate, gummies, candies, yogurts and soups. Beyond the digestive health market, LactoSpore has also found applications in whey protein supplements, and become a big seller in the sports nutrition market. Realising the potential of this ingredient, Sabinsa invested in its own dedicated manufacturing facility to ensure ample and consistent supply of material meeting their high quality standards.

In an exclusive interview with NuFFooDS Spectrum, Dr Muhammed Majeed and Shaheen Majeed, the father and son duo who have been spearheading Sami Labs/Sabinsa Group as Founder & Chairman, Sami Labs, and Sabinsa Group and Marketing Director, Sabinsa Corporation respectively, shared their views on the functional foods market and competition and the 'Make In India' initiative of the government of India. An excerpt of the interview:



## 'Investing in future will pay rich dividends'

**Currently Sabinsa/Sami Labs has three products in nutritional functional blends mainly targeted at anti-inflammatory, joint support, immune support, and weight management.**

**When you will be launching new products in the functional food space?**

**Shaheen Majeed:** We have developed many products in the functional foods space. We started our focus on functional foods and blends in 2005-06. For anti-inflammatory support we have ArthriBlend SR, a blend of our proprietary ingredients which contains Glucosamine Sulfate, Boswellin, Curcumin C3 Complex, and BioPerine. For cold and cough aid, we have Hot Sip, a powdered extract blend containing *Adhatoda vasica*, *Alpinia galanga*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra* and *Piper longum*. Similarly, for weight management, we have LeanGard, containing ForsLean, GarCitrin and BioPerine. Additionally we have Citrin K BG, Cococin, Curcumin C3 Complex, LactoSpore, Saberry, Selenium SeLECT that are Generally Recognised As Safe (GRAS) affirmed products. GRAS is an American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) designation that a chemical or substance added to food is considered safe as demonstrated by a review of safety data by experts, and so is exempted from the usual Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) food additive tolerance requirements.

One of the most fascinating areas continues to be the digestion and healthy immune segment of the marketplace. Our LactoSpore ingredient has been effective in this area, and been used as a digestive aid and for gastrointestinal health. It has application in the probiotic space as it has 6 billion & 15 billion organisms/gram and produces lactic acid. We have also developed a number of patents on soon to be introduced products in the functional foods space.

Some of the minerals we provide which have nutritional applications include Selenium SeLECT Pure "GRAS

affirmed" (L-Selenomethionine), Bis-glycinato oxo vanadium, Zinc Monomethionine, Zinc Picolinate, Methyl SelenoCysteine, a Calcium Ascorbate etc. Some of these products have approvals from Health Canada and other parts of the world, and have applications in different industries in addition to nutritional, nutraceuticals, probiotics, and cosmetics etc. Companies like Sami Labs may take at least 2-3 years to come up with new product depending on the approval process for in vitro, in vivo, toxicity studies, type of study, preclinical, clinical studies, pre and post market surveillance studies etc, but we always have innovative ingredients in the pipeline.



**How do you see the opportunities in the functional food space in India and developing world as compared to developed markets like the USA, Japan and Europe?**

**Shaheen Majeed:** The functional foods market in the developing world with the expansion of the middle class is growing at 15-20%, whereas in the developed world the market is currently experiencing single digit growth. There is the need, and opportunity, to create awareness and promote healthy lifestyle choices among the middle class population in the developing world.

**How much investment will Sami Labs be making in developing new products?**

**Dr Muhammed Majeed:** We have been spending about 5% of our sales on future requirements each year. We have been investing this or more for the last 20 years. This forward looking investment has given us good results in the form of patents and new prod-

ucts, which have been well received by the customers across the globe. We will continue a similar level of investment on research and development, product innovation and also on product patents in the coming years.

**Looking at the growth of the functional foods space, how does Sami Labs plan to build business? Are you looking at vertical or horizontal growth?**

**Shaheen Majeed:** We are looking for more marketing companies in developed markets such as the USA, European Union and Japan. In South East Asia, we are looking for manufacturing facilities to strengthen our operations and agricultural opportunities to grow our supply. We feel this is the right time to acquire companies in the western market and make our presence even more strongly felt in the global space. Companies are now looking at China as a market for their products in 3Ns. With China being a known destination for its traditional medicinal strength, do you see China as a competitor in 3Ns space?

**Dr Muhammed Majeed:** With increased deforestation and demand for herbal plants, India is on the verge of witnessing the extinction of over 200-300 rare herbal species in next two decades. This will create opportunities for Indian companies to work with local inhabitants to preserve the rich flora and fauna and biodiversity of the country. It's also an opportunity to cultivate these herbs to meet demand while preserving their existence. China, known for its traditional medicines, will continue to offer opportunity for companies to import its traditional herbs and sell products related to functional foods, functional beverages, nutritionals and nutraceuticals in the local market. With the increase in diabetic patients in China, there is demand for natural ingredients to address common lifestyle-related health challenges.

**Of the many product and services on**



offer from Sami Labs, which are making good return on investments? Which products and services do you feel have high profit margins for the company?

**Dr Muhammed Majeed:** In all Sami Labs has developed about 30-35 products from its range of over 95 patents across different functional areas. Of the many products, Citrin K BG, Cococin, Curcumin C3 Complex, LactoSpore, Saberry and Selenium SeLECT, in particular have made a lot of difference to customers in terms of health benefits, and brought in significant contributions to company sales in the last two decades. We see opportunities in cosmeceuticals, functional foods, functional beverages, and nutritional ingredients in particular.

Being in the business for the last 25 years, what business model do you feel will help the companies achieve more growth?

**Dr Muhammed Majeed:** Investing in the future will pay richer dividends than anything else, certainly more sustainable returns than focusing only on short term profits. With this strong belief, we have been spending on research and development and working on new product development and market oriented research that will result in novel products. At the same time we strongly feel the need to have intellectual property protected so that the innovator will continue to invest in R&D to develop safe, high quality products that will benefit human health.

With new government at the centre India has started 'Make In India' campaign to attract investments. What are your views on this and what will your company's contributions to this campaign be?

**Dr Muhammed Majeed:** It's a very important programme. In fact, we have been championing 'Made In India' since 1991 when we set up our first manufacturing and R&D centre in Bangalore, India. We have been consistently investing in India, over the last 25 years, in manufacturing, R&D labs, overall talent pool, creating jobs here in India. Besides offering products for the local market we have been exporting 90% of our produce at premium prices to the global markets. We will continue to invest and drive towards contributing to government's 'Make In India' campaign as well.

Your company has presence in many countries across the globe. Of the different regions which region has more growth potential for companies like Sami Labs?

**Shaheen Majeed:** We are very optimistic about the South East Asian region, in which we see a high growth, specifically in countries like Indonesia, and Malaysia, where we expect a 20% growth in the coming years due to easy market accessibility with regulatory hurdles that a company like Sami Labs can handle. Japan is another region where one can bet on growth of consistency in the nutritional and nutraceuticals space. **INS**

