Study says functional foods may be risky

May 19 2007

A group of Dutch scientists is calling for better European Union monitoring of foods claiming to improve health.

The report, published in the British Medical Journal, says not enough is known about the safety and effectiveness of so-called functional foods such as yogurt, health drinks and fortified margarine, the journal said in a news release.

Nynke de Jong and colleagues from the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment in the Netherlands say further study is especially needed into products enriched with phytosterol and stanol, which work to reduce levels of bad cholesterol.

Current ERU rules focus primarily on evaluating the safety of these foods before they reach the supermarket. The scientists say there are no regulations dealing with health issues that may arise after these products have been marketed.

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Citation: Study says functional foods may be risky (2007, May 19) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-05-functional-foods-risky.html

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