

NUTRITIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOJI (*LYCIUM BARBARUM*) BERRY - A REVIEW

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Goji berries have been known for over 2000 years in Tibet and have been used in traditional Chinese medicine because of the many benefits they provide to the human body. Recently, the interest in goji berries has grown considerably due to the awareness of the functional properties they carry, being rich sources of polysaccharides, phenolic substances, proteins, fibers, mineral elements, vitamins necessary in human nutrition. Today, goji berries are called a "superfood" with numerous nutritional advantages. In Europe, there is a dynamic increase in the consumption and direct cultivation of goji berries.

The most widespread species of goji berries is *Lycium Barbarum*, popularly also known as hedge buckthorn. Goji berries contain notable levels of dietary fiber, either in soluble (2.6%) or insoluble (8.8%) form. The ratio of insoluble to soluble fiber is about 3:1. The recommended dietary fiber intake for adults is 25 g/day. With the consumption of a 30 g portion of dried berries, the fiber intake for adults is about 14% of the recommended daily intake. Taking into account European legislation (EC Regulation 1924/2006), dried goji berries can be marketed with the label "high fiber content" because it contains at least 6 g of fiber per 100 g.

Goji berries represent a substantial source of microelements in this regard, it is noted that they contain K, P and Cu with a value above 15% of the recommended daily dose. *Lycium Barbarum* berries contain 15.7% of the RDA of iron, so it can be recommended as a valuable source in the daily diet.

Among the goji berries' polyphenols, caffeic acid, chlorogenic acid, p-coumaric acid, quercetin and kaempferol are present. Carotenoids represent significant values, the dominant ester being identified as zeaxanthin dipalmitate. The content of zeaxanthin dipalmitate in dried berries is about 159 mg/100g and β -carotene is about 1mg/100g.

Thus, goji berries are rich in essential compounds recommended for a balanced diet. They can be used as raw materials for obtaining new functional products, a field of perspective that can be practiced in our country.

Keywords: balanced diet, essential compounds, functional properties, high fiber content, superfood.

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