Micreos rebrands phage portfolio to PhageGuard

Micreos, the global leader in applied phage technology for food safety and human health, is pleased to launch new branding and communication tools for use by the food industry to help consumers better understand the benefits of phages.

Phages are the most abundant microorganisms on the planet. They are everywhere, one ml seawater contains one billion phages. The human gut contains one million billion phages ($10^{15}$). Phages are completely harmless for people, animals and plants, they are the natural enemy of bacteria.

Phages are targeted against specific bacterial species. This means they can be applied to kill only unwanted pathogens like Listeria and Salmonella, while leaving the beneficial bacteria intact. They are a valuable food safety intervention to combat Listeria and Salmonella in meat and poultry, fish, cheese and produce. Micreos Food Safety has developed Listex™ and Salmonelex™, the two most successful commercial phage-products, used to fight food borne illnesses. These products will now be rebranded to more effectively define their ability to help produce safer food. A focus group study led to the decision.

Bert de Vegt, Managing Director at Micreos, said, "The study told us a lot about consumer perceptions. We knew our organically-produced phages were being used successfully by many food processors around the world but many of the advantages of phages could be communicated more clearly to the public."

"Equally important," said De Vegt, "we wanted to help our customers in the food business explain the reasons behind their use of phages to their customers. We decided the best way to do that would be to ask consumers about their perception of phages. Their answers provided us with tools and a direction for the narrative."

"Product names help our food processing partners talk with their customers about the advantages of these two organic solutions, to help create a safer food environment for families, children and people with compromised immune systems," said De Vegt.
A new website will support our rebranding, and a series of visual aids and white papers has been developed that discuss the natural, organic basis of phages and explain how they eradicate bacteria that create food borne illnesses.

"We learned phage technology currently draws a blank with too many consumers. Their position is neutral but open, giving us the opportunity to tell our story and how organically produced phages use the power of nature and provide consumers with safer food."

Talking about the focus group study, De Vegt said, consumers increasingly demand transparency from their suppliers "there is a concern that food processors might not be acting in the consumers' best interest.. Many of them are asking 'What animal husbandry policies do they operate by? What ingredients are in the product? Is it free of antibiotics and chemicals? Is it organic? What role does the company play in society? What is the processor's ethics code?' The list of questions that need to be answered before processors can earn their trust goes on and on."

Answering those questions was at the heart of the Micreos' rebranding work. "We knew we had a great story to tell and wanted to be 100% transparent with our answer to any possible consumer question about the natural relationship between phages and food safety," said De Vegt.

Those answers would be important as Micreos begins to expand from its meat and poultry base in the U.S. to other foods such as seafood, cheese and produce.

“Our products are being rebranded as PhageGuard L against *Listeria* and PhageGuard S, which has been successfully used against *Salmonella* for years,” said De Vegt. “The names are more descriptive and help communicate the message that our phage products are a ‘smart, green and easy’ way to combat food borne illnesses.”

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