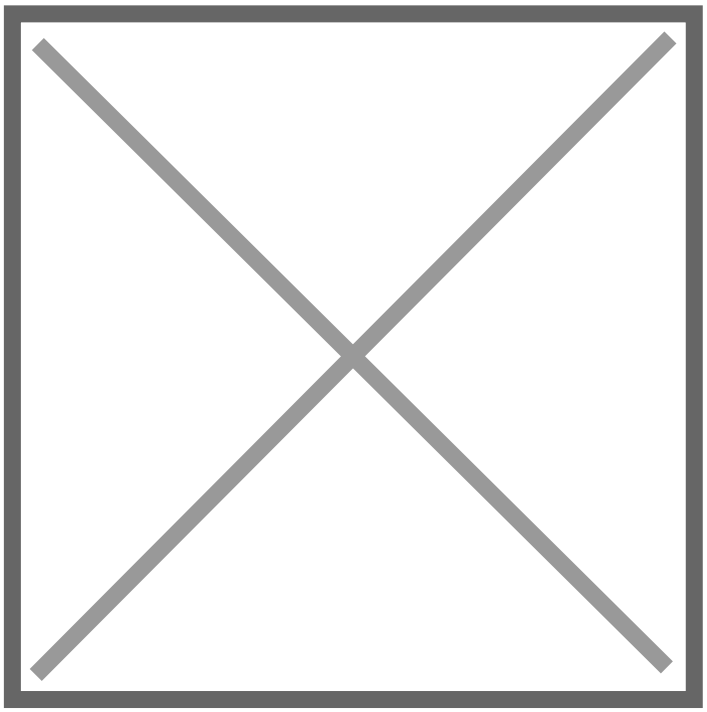
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Healthy Aging: Asiaâ??s $205Bn Nutraceuticals Market Opportunity

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By 2030, over 60 percent of the world's population, some 500 million people, will be
aged 60 or above in Asia 2 . To tackle the economic ramifications of the issue, such as the rising costs of healthcare, governments across Asia are developing new strategies that address and promote healthy ageing.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), healthy ageing is "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age" 3 .

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are taxing the healthcare system. The incidence of NCDs and their associated requirements for long term care increase with age, which is compounded by increasing life expectancy, as the requirements for long term care is sustained over a higher number of years. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 70% of deaths globally result from NCDs, particularly cancer and from issues related to obesity, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

NCDs can be prevented through better health and nutrition. Academic studies in the United States (US) show that every USD 1 invested in preventative healthcare can save USD 5 in treatment cost. 4

As we age, our metabolism decreases and we require less energy, but our need for nutrients increases. Our societal thirst for fast food and satiety has resulted in a prevalence of fatty, salty and sweet foods, which have rapidly become part of our staple diet and yet do not deliver sufficient nutritional value. Better nutrition aids healthy ageing by improving nutrient deficiency.

Thus, governments are promoting the benefits of nutraceutical products such as fortified food, reformulated food and functional food that offer nutritional supplements and assist in treating or preventing disease (apart from anemia), to provide medical benefits.

Considered measures to tackle health problems through nutrition include programmes such as national nutrition plans in China; school lunch programmes in India that are interventions to prevent child malnutrition; or stipulating through regulation in Malaysia to restrict access to high-calorie products through food-zoning, which controls the type of food sold in certain areas and makes sure that calorie information is on display; or higher taxes on high-sugar and high-fat food; or even, to incentivize food in Singapore workers to persuade consumers to choose healthier food options.

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