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Chilean firm proposes solvent-free krill extraction

By Shane Starling, 24-Nov-2009

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A Chilean krill extraction specialist has applied for a global patent it says will allow oils to be extracted from krill without the use of solvents and offer savings of about 30 per cent.

Tharos has been working in a consultant role within the krill industry for about 30 years, and has lodged the 45-page patent application with the Swiss patent office, after developing the undisclosed technology for about six years.

Managing director, Dimitri Scabos, said the technology could produce cleaner oils at lower cost, and that most of the major krill suppliers including market leaders Aker Biomarine, Neptune Technologies and Bioresources and Enzymotec had expressed interest in the technology.

"The cost of using solvents is very high as it cannot be done on the boat when the krill is harvested," Scabos said. "So we see a lot of value for the industry in this technology in both price and quality."

Scabos said he expected the application to be processed within six months at which time the technology could be available for krill extraction is conducted with solvents such as hexane.

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He said the technology could deliver cleaner oils, although acknowledged krill oil cleanliness was not a widespread problem with in the industry, even with solvent extraction.

Scabos observed a disconnect between krill harvesters and processors and said a cheaper extraction method could help them connect and increase the overall krill oil yield. Most krill enters the market from suppliers based in Norway, Poland, the US, Korea, the Ukraine and Israel.

He said this was the case because a solvent-free system would allow more onboard harvesting.

"This technology has the potential to allow companies to achieve vertical integration," he said.


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