

Book Review

Superfood – Fakten aus dem Reich der Wundermittel

Reinhild Berger

For some years, superfoods have been very much in vogue, especially among younger people who often get their nutritional knowledge from various social media channels. It is therefore very positive that the author Reinhild Berger has taken on this important topic and critically examines the most popular and currently most advertised products in her entertainingly written “mini textbook”.

In particular, the author takes a closer look at the following plant-based raw materials and the preparations made from them: Açai berries, acerola, algae species such as chlorella and spirulina, aloe vera, amaranth, aronia, buckwheat, camu camu, chia seeds, coracorn, curcuma, psyllium husks, fonio, goji berries, pomegranate, hemp seeds, clinoptilolite, coconut oil, kombucha, MCT oil, papaya, quinoa, teff and zeolite. The author tries to determine what is behind the products advertised as “superfoods” and how the suppliers succeed in appealing to their respective clientele with clever marketing. For example, it is stated that health-related claims about food in the European Union are subject to the requirements of the Health Claims Regulation and therefore the respective “superfoods” are often advertised very imaginatively by the respective marketing departments. Furthermore, the author notes that the composition of food supplements enriched with “superfoods” is often not precisely known and, moreover, the claimed health benefits are not always scientifically proven. It is also criticized that the vitamins contained in food supplements are often synthetic additives, although the advertising of the products indicates that only natural raw materials have been used. The author even warns that “superfoods” might be contaminated with harmful substances and are comparatively expensive compared to domestic vegetables and fruits. In addition, it is

pointed out that especially exotic foods involve an increased risk of food allergies or intolerances and that undesirable interactions with medicines may be also possible.

In her critical observations, however, the author fails to mention that superfoods can certainly enrich the diet and provide completely new flavour experiences, even if a significant added health value, when compared to domestic vegetables and fruits, cannot always be expected. Unfortunately, the author does not address the fact that some of the “superfoods” listed in the book not only serve a healthy diet but, as several evidence-based studies show, can also be an important factor in human nutrition and integrative medicine. Since the author is primarily concerned with conveying “miracle medicine facts” to the reader in a concise form, the scientific aspects have unfortunately been somewhat neglected. The book is primarily aimed at nutritionists and (the predominantly young) consumers of food supplements and calls for a new perspective away from the mainstream and a more critical look at the promises made in the marketing of superfood products.

Dr. H. Schulz

E-mail: hs.consulting.map@t-online.de

Reinhild Berger, Superfoods – Fakten aus dem Reich der Wundermittel, Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, Stuttgart, herausgegeben von Martin Smollich unter Mitarbeit von Friederike Schmidt, first edition 2023, 257 pages, 143 figures, 4 tables, price: 24,80 €, ISBN: 978-3-8047-4330-4.