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SuanNutra Eyes APAC Growth for RelaxPLX Following South Korea Recognition

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As consumer demand for natural, science-backed solutions for sleep and stress continues to grow, the nutraceutical industry is placing greater emphasis on clinically substantiated ingredients with clear regulatory pathways. Against this backdrop, SuanNutra’s RelaxPLX is gaining momentum following regulatory milestones in Canada and South Korea, including Health Canada approval and MFDS individual recognition.

Derived from botanical sources, RelaxPLX is positioned to support sleep quality and stress-related wellbeing, with the ingredient backed by multiple placebo-controlled clinical studies across different population groups. Its evidence base

includes assessments of sleep quality and stress-related outcomes, alongside measures such as actigraphy, cortisol and nocturnal melatonin in specific studies.

The recent regulatory developments strengthen the ingredient's commercial prospects in key international markets while providing brand owners with a stronger foundation for developing differentiated sleep and stress management products. RelaxPLX also reflects the broader shift towards clean-label, plant-based and clinically supported solutions across the global wellness market.

In this interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum Asia, Tomás Muñoz Gutiérrez, Commercial Director, APAC, SuanNutra, discusses the significance of the recent regulatory approvals, the clinical evidence supporting RelaxPLX, challenges associated with the MFDS approval process, and the evolving opportunities for sleep and stress management ingredients across Asia-Pacific and global nutraceutical markets.

RelaxPLX has recently secured approvals from both Health Canada and South Korea's MFDS. How do these regulatory milestones strengthen the ingredient's global commercial positioning, and what opportunities do they create for brand partners in the nutraceutical sector?

The Health Canada Product Licence and the MFDS individual recognition are two very important milestones for RelaxPLX because they validate the ingredient in two highly respected regulatory environments.

For brand partners, this creates a much stronger platform for product development. In Canada, RelaxPLX has approved claims covering sleep quality, symptoms of sleep disturbance, perceived stress, cortisol as a biomarker of physical stress, and sleep quality in specific consumer contexts. In South Korea, the MFDS individual recognition gives RelaxPLX a locally validated position in the Health Functional Food market.

From a commercial perspective, these milestones provide partners with greater security and a stronger foundation to communicate benefits. They show that RelaxPLX is not only clinically supported, but also able to meet demanding regulatory expectations in different regions. That is increasingly important for brands looking for differentiated ingredients with a clear scientific and regulatory validation.

They also strengthen RelaxPLX's global positioning within SuanNutra's visible health platform. Sleep quality and stress-related wellbeing are benefits consumers can understand and feel in daily life, which makes RelaxPLX® highly relevant for brands developing next-generation wellness products.

Consumers are increasingly seeking natural solutions for sleep and stress management. How does RelaxPLX differentiate itself from other botanical sleep ingredients available in the market, both in terms of scientific evidence and formulation benefits?

RelaxPLX differentiates itself because it brings together botanical origin, clinical evidence and regulatory recognition in a category where many ingredients still rely on traditional use or broad relaxation positioning.

From a scientific perspective, RelaxPLX is supported by multiple placebo-controlled clinical studies assessing sleep quality and stress-related outcomes in different populations, including adults and adolescents. The evidence includes validated questionnaires and, in specific studies, objective or biomarker-related outcomes such as actigraphy, cortisol and nocturnal melatonin. This gives product developers a more complete substantiation package that stands out in the market and consumers appreciate it.

Another important point is that RelaxPLX connects sleep quality with stress-related wellbeing. Consumers increasingly understand that poor sleep and stress are closely linked, but many products still address these needs separately. RelaxPLX allows brands to build a more integrated positioning around rest, balance and daily wellbeing.

From a formulation and product development perspective, RelaxPLX offers a clear daily-use botanical concept that fits well with clean-label, plant-based and science-backed wellness positioning. It can support brands that want to move beyond generic sleep products and create more credible, differentiated solutions for consumers looking for better rest and stress-related balance.

The MFDS approval process is widely regarded as one of the most rigorous for functional ingredients. Could you share some of the key scientific and regulatory challenges SuanNutra encountered during the approval journey, and the lessons learned?

The MFDS individual recognition process is highly demanding because it requires much more than a general ingredient story. The dossier needs to bring together safety, quality, functionality and scientific substantiation in a way that is aligned with Korean regulatory expectations.

One of the key challenges was ensuring that the scientific evidence was structured clearly and consistently for MFDS review. RelaxPLX already had a strong clinical foundation, but the process required the data to be organized with a high level of precision, clearly linking the ingredient, its standardization, the clinical outcomes and the proposed functionality.

Another important aspect was demonstrating robust quality standards. This includes consistent botanical sourcing, controlled manufacturing processes and well-defined specifications to ensure batch-to-batch reproducibility. These elements are critical in a market like Korea, where regulators expect a high level of transparency and control over ingredient quality.

The process from dossier preparation to final MFDS individual recognition was completed in approximately 10 months, which is a very efficient timeline for this type of pathway in Korea. This was achieved in close collaboration with our partner COSMAX BIO and reflects the strength of the scientific and technical package supporting RelaxPLX.

While local regulatory expertise is always valuable to navigate specific requirements, the core of the approval was built on the strength of the clinical evidence, the clarity of the scientific rationale and the robustness of the quality standards behind RelaxPLX.

One of the main lessons learned is the importance of preparing for regulatory expectations early. Strong clinical data are essential, but they also need to be supported by a coherent technical dossier, clear scientific rationale and well-established quality systems.

RelaxPLX is supported by multiple placebo-controlled clinical studies across different population groups, including adolescents. Which clinical findings do you believe are the most significant for product developers and healthcare professionals?

For product developers, one of the most significant aspects is the consistency of the sleep-quality findings across different study populations. RelaxPLX has been studied in adults with sleep and stress-related concerns, adults with sleep disturbances, and adolescents with stress-related sleep challenges.

The findings are especially relevant because they are not based only on subjective perception. The studies include validated sleep-quality tools and, in specific cases, objective or physiological measures such as actigraphy, cortisol and nocturnal melatonin. This gives a more complete view of the ingredient’s potential role in sleep quality and stress-related wellbeing.

For healthcare professionals, the adolescent study is particularly interesting because sleep and stress are increasingly relevant concerns among younger populations. The study used validated tools to assess sleep and stress-related outcomes, and it adds an important dimension to the evidence package. In this case, the benefits were not only self-reported by the adolescents, but were also confirmed by their parents, who participated in the study and provided an additional layer of validation.

Importantly, the study outcomes were also validated by an independent expert who was blinded to the group allocation, meaning they did not know which participants were in the placebo group or receiving RelaxPLX. This external assessment confirmed the improvements and benefits observed in the RelaxPLX group, adding an additional layer of objectivity and robustness to the findings.

Another important finding is the connection between sleep quality and stress-related markers. Consumers often experience these issues together, and the clinical evidence behind RelaxPLX reflects that real-life connection. For brands and healthcare professionals, this supports a more holistic conversation around rest, balance and everyday wellbeing.

With growing interest in clean-label, plant-based, and evidence-backed nutraceuticals, how do you see the sleep and stress management category evolving over the next five years? What role will ingredients like RelaxPLX play in this transformation?

We expect the sleep and stress management category to become more sophisticated over the next five years.

Consumers are moving beyond generic relaxation claims. They want solutions that are natural, but also credible, clinically supported and relevant to their daily lives. At the same time, brands are looking for ingredients that can support clear positioning and responsible communication.

We also expect the category to become more integrated. Sleep, stress, mood, recovery and daily performance are increasingly seen as connected areas of wellbeing, rather than isolated needs. This creates an opportunity for ingredients that can support a broader visible health narrative.

Another important shift will be the demand for alternatives to conventional sleep-support approaches. Consumers are interested in botanical and non-habit-forming solutions that fit into daily self-care routines, especially when they are supported by clinical evidence.

Ingredients like RelaxPLX can play an important role in this transformation because they combine botanical origin, clinical substantiation and regulatory progress in key markets. RelaxPLX helps move the category from a simple “relaxation” message toward a more complete platform around sleep quality, stress-related wellbeing and benefits consumers can genuinely feel in everyday life.

Looking ahead, what are SuanNutra’s strategic priorities for RelaxPLX in Asia-Pacific and other international markets? Are there plans for additional clinical research, new health claims, or collaborations with food, beverage, or dietary supplement manufacturers?

Our priority is to continue building RelaxPLX as a clinically supported global ingredient for sleep quality and stress-related wellbeing.

In Asia-Pacific, South Korea is an important strategic market because of the MFDS individual recognition and the influence Korea has across the wider region. Together with COSMAX BIO, we are focused on supporting commercial development and helping partners create credible sleep-support products for Korean consumers.

More broadly, we see strong opportunities across Asia-Pacific, North America and other international markets where consumers are looking for plant-based, science-backed solutions for sleep and stress-related wellbeing.

We are also continuing to explore opportunities for additional clinical and regulatory development, always with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and supporting compliant claims in different markets.

From a product development perspective, we are open to collaborations with dietary supplement, functional food and beverage manufacturers where the format, positioning and regulatory framework make sense. The goal is to help brands create products that are not only scientifically credible, but also relevant to how consumers understand wellness today.

RelaxPLX fits very naturally within SuanNutra’s visible health strategy: developing ingredients with benefits that are science-backed, consumer-relevant and connected to everyday wellbeing.