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Present Status of *Kochujang*, a Fermented Hot Pepper Soybean Paste, and its History

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Abstract

Kochujang, a fermented hot pepper soybean paste, is a spicy condiment mixed with red pepper, boiled rice and mold fermented soybean (as *koji*) which is then fermented for several months. It has unique taste of hot, sweet, salty and savory flavor by all mixed ingredients by fermentation, and is one of most famous Korean traditional foods.

The scale of the *kochujang* industry is about 200 billion won in Korea, and 7.8 million dollars and 4,500 tons in exports. Although it is still not a large part of the food industry in Korea, the scale of soy products will increase because it is a major subsidiary food in our dietary life and has grown from a homemade to a mass produced product.

Kochujang has the largest market in the scale of sales among fermented soybean products and has merit because of its domestic base and its ability to grow to an international market due to its unique fermented taste. In order to make *kochujang* an international food, it is necessary to study the scientific development of *kochujang* and the diversity of products using *kochujang* that are fitted to the taste of people around the world. In addition, participation in various exhibitions and food fairs supported by the government should help to promote *kochujang* throughout the world. In addition, these should be actively supported by the related businesses.

Red pepper, a major ingredient in *kochujang*, has been widely studied and shown to have a positive effect on the reduction of fat, on the strengthening of the immune system, and on active biological functions. A fermented spice like *kochujang* has been shown to be beneficial for the body due to the process of fermentation rather than from the red pepper itself.

If we prove the various biological functions of *kochujang* with a particular taste and flavor, it will energize a new market. It is necessary for business to make a continuous effort supported by the scientific world and by government policy, in order to introduce this traditional food to the world.

In the present day, the *kochujang* market is now on a firm basis and has been activated in the field of its study. Now, it is possible to achieve the birth of a secondary international market by concentrating on these efforts.