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International Trends Analysis of Good Agricultural Practice(GAP)

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While users of herbal formulae have been disappointed with the lack of uniformity in the quality of herbs provided by the herb suppliers of different standings, they do not have better guarantee apart from relying on the more reputable ones. The tradition of identifying special geographic sites as being specific for the supply of certain herbal items is no longer reliable since the high demand for large quantities of quality supply would have drained any traditional supply dry. Since the European Union started to advocate a quality supply of the first manufacturing material for herbal products by introducing a comprehensive recommendation of practices: from seedling, planting, fertilizing, harvesting, storage and distribution, the idea of good agricultural practice becomes an attractive reality. There is good prospect of an excellent supply of quality herbal products with uniformity, if Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) could be enforced. The substantiation of GAP will be a great blessing for both the manufacturers and consumers of herbal products.

Although the need for GAP is urgent, and Korea, Japan, China and the World Health Organization have, one after the other, written up their recommendation, to put GAP into real practice would take time.

GAP in Korea is particularly difficult, not only because the herbal items involved are in great numbers but also because the current practice of growing medicinal herbs, their marketing and distribution, have been counter-productive to the introduction of the new system of GAP.

Unless the demand for herbal supply was limited, otherwise, GAP will not be able to satisfy the extensive need for uniformity. Short of the knowledge of the exact, accurate nature of the active component within a herb, there will be no perfect guarantee on the quality supply. Henceforth, even when GAP becomes a mature practice, what is required for quality control, viz, different levels of authentication, from chemical fingerprinting to molecular, DNA identification will remain necessary as cross-checking mechanisms to make sure that uniformity in scientific experiments and drug development is not violated.

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