Interview: Chin Chun Lin – Chairman, Taiwan Leader Biotech Corp., Taiwan



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Chin Chun Lin, chairman of Taiwan Leader Biotech

Corp., discusses the importance of herbal medicine for preventive healthcare, and shares valuable insights into Taiwan Leader Biotech Corp., a leading company in medicinal fungus, that established brand recognition through balancing social, economic and environmental perspectives while promoting the importance of the environment within the herbal medicine community.

Taiwan Leader Biotech Corp. is a pioneer is in herbal medicine. While the herbal medicine market is now growing internationally, can you introduce us to this niche market here in Taiwan and Asia?

Herbal medicine is indeed the growing industry worldwide. The same applies for Asian markets and Taiwan. Our company specializes in developing *Taiwanofungus camphoratus*, a medicinal fungus that is a unique mushroom of Taiwan. We pride ourselves on contributing to the herbal medicine niche market as scientific research already proved the medicinal fungus for protection of diverse health-related conditions.

What would you say are the reasons that herbal remedies and supplements segment is about to reach 115 USD billion by 2020 globally?

The herbal medicine market has a promising future due to increasing popularity and emerging trend of preventive medicine. Herbal medicine is of particular interest as preventive agents

because of their potentially low toxicity profiles and potential effectiveness. The factors that fueled growth in the market include widespread acceptance of herbal medicine.

What market need did you identify with Taiwan Leader Biotech back in 2006?

We discovered a unique product that can be developed only in Taiwan. It was a novel, innovative product worldwide and we could have penetrated the market primarily from Taiwan. This was a market opportunity that we decided to seize. Afterwards, we directed our efforts to promote it globally. However, we do not only develop health supplements, but we also conduct scientific research for the efficacy of botanical drugs. Last year we applied phase I and phase IIa clinical trials for botanical drug LEAC-102 and received US FDA approval. Our drug has shown efficacy in animal model tests. Additionally, we have received a health food certificate proving efficacy and safety of the health food product. Gradually, we expanded to China and applied for CFDA in 2011. However, China does not recognize our product as a part of traditional Chinese medicine. Therefore, we need to go through a lot of application procedures in order to receive the approval.

What sets you apart from other herbal medicine companies?

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Our company has four core techniques: complete culture collection, screening and preservation of strains of *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* (*Antrodia cinnamomea*; *Antrodia camphorata*), innovative technique of cut-log cultivation, high-efficient solid-state cultivation technique and technique of analysis of phytochemicals and bioactivities. We use an ultra-low temperature liquid nitrogen preservation technique (which is considered the best, the most stable and the longest preservation technique in the industry) to store the strains while collaborating with academic institutes to validate the best preservation and activation conditions. We are continuously collecting strains from different sources and also adopting the subculture methods for edible or medicinal fungi to acquire more diverse strain sources. Currently, there are more than 300 *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* strains preserved in the culture bank. As various types and sources are available in this bank, it is highly possible to select highly active strains for future mass production. As a result of using the innovative technique of cultivation of *Taiwanofungus camphoratus.* Taiwan Leader Biotech is able to manage and cultivate medicinal fungi in a more systematic and scientific manner. Moreover, we produce products in a stable, 10K-level clean room environment with good control of temperature and humidity. In addition to that, our company has collaborated with academic institutes, and the test results proved that our products had shown different biological activities such as anti-oxidation and anti-inflammation.

Can you introduce us to your product portfolio?

Our main products are Leader Antrodia cinnamomea capsule and Leader Deluxe Antrodia cinnamomea capsule. Both of the products feature high-efficiency solid-state cultivation of *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* and were certified by the Institute of Biotechnology and Medicine Industry as Symbols of National Quality. Leader Antrodia cinnamomea capsule also received a Health Food of Immunomodulation Certification, while Leader Deluxe capsule is expected to receive a dual certification. In addition to that, our health supplements also benefit people with hepatitis and dermatitis. Moreover, our products showed efficacy on inflammation and immune related diseases. The animal studies have revealed that our products can enhance immune responses. However, in the future we expect to prove the efficacy on humans as well. It will be developed as a combination therapy with anti-cancer drugs. Our products can increase immune responses, and therefore help to get rid of undesirable side effects. In addition to cancer drugs, we are focusing on areas of liver protection and hepatitis related treatment.

How do you distribute products?

We distribute our products mainly through pharmaceutical chain stores in Taiwan. However, we are collaborating also with US companies and Macau companies.

What is the R&D and marketing strategy for your products?

We develop health food products from raw material production of medicinal fungus. Countries such as China, Japan and Taiwan have special regulations applied to health supplements. As I already mentioned, we received US FDA approval, and we applied for TFDA approval for phase I/IIa clinical trials of botanical drug, LEAC-102. However, this is in review stage. For further botanical drug development, we need to conduct more research to prove the efficacy, and investment to be able to finance it. In the future, we may develop small molecular or new chemical entity (NCE) drug in the future. We have already identified and purified some constituents and received the patents for the constituents or their application. However, this field is more challenging due to being a highly competitive market. Nevertheless, gradually we will follow this direction to get more revenues and investments into R&D.

What are your best performing markets in terms of revenue?

Since establishing the company in 2006, safety and quality have been our philosophies to drive the growth of the company. Therefore, we made a lot of investments in R&D to prove safety and efficacy of the products. Gradually, we expanded our market to China and other regional markets.

There are some competitors on the market already but we have a unique functional claim. In terms of revenues, we can't break even yet, because we invest the most in research and development. However, we have been listed on the Taiwan stock market as an emerging company since January 2016 and this year we plan to IPO to further expand our business.

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What are your strategic priorities to accelerate the growth of the company?

We are interested in an international strategic partnership with distributors and pharmaceutical companies for co-developing botanical drugs to speed up the pharmaceutical development and increase our revenue.

What is the best asset of the company?

In addition to our technology, I would refer to the talented and skilled people we employ and the sustainable forest management we are implementing into our business model. It is focusing on reforestation of trees – *Cinnamomum kanehirae* Hayata being endangered species. Therefore, we use the cut-log cultivation of fungus and promote the environmental importance within the herbal medicine community.

You are one of a few companies that has been awarded a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. How does this recognition represent the company's business philosophy?

We are the only biotech company in the *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* industry in Taiwan holding FSC-FM/COC certificate. The cut-log suppliers of *Cinnamomum kanehirae* Hayata will be scarce in the future. Therefore, we devote considerable resources in environmental protection and other social responsibilities. We not only promote and develop *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* products, also reforestation of *Cinnamomum kanehirae* Hayata. Additionally, we pride ourselves in meeting international standards that integrate balance on social, economic and environmental perspectives. This is the direction and the vision that the company will continue to follow in the future.

What is your contribution to the Taiwanese healthcare system?

Looking back historically, *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* was used as a traditional medicine by local people for liver disease prevention. Afterwards, scientists discovered it indeed has liver protection function to prevent liver related disease and it has shown efficacy for enhancing immune system, too. We have a hand in developing products that can help people enhance their health.

Consequently, we promote and contribute to increase awareness about the importance of preventive medicine.

Where will the company be in five years?

Very simply, we are committed to becoming a leader in the *Taiwanofungus camphoratus* industry. Considering our technology, people and the quality our products feature, I am positive we will achieve this goal.

What do you want our international readers to think when they hear the name Taiwan Leader Biotech Corp.?

The company’s slogan is: leading wellness, building happiness. We believe in promoting and raising awareness about health as being the most important factor in leading a happier life.

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