Introduction

Fructooligosaccharides are widely used as a health food ingredient with a new concept of “prebiotics” in many countries. So far, many extensive studies on these unique oligosaccharides have been made since the author found the usefulness of fructooligosaccharides as a bifidus-promoting factor 20 years ago. Japan is considered the most-developed country concerning the application of and studies on functional foods. The studies on fructooligosaccharides have played the role of an engine for the development of functional foods and have been accompanied with the widespread use of Foods for Specified Health Use in Japan.

The International Symposium on Fructooligosaccharides was held at Keidanren Kaikan in Tokyo on July 3, 2001. The object of this meeting was to review and to summarize the updated scientific findings on fructooligosaccharides and related matters. Ten speakers, including overseas scientists, were invited to present lectures on topics related to fructooligosaccharides from various aspects. They were aided by two cochairpersons, Professor Hidemasa Hidaka, Tokiwa Junior College, and Professor Takashi Sakata, Ishinomaki Senshu University. The symposium was sponsored by Meiji Seika Kaisha, Ltd., Tokyo. A total of 450 participants attended.

This issue of Bioscience and Microflora provides all papers presented at the symposium. I believe this proceeding will be valuable to those who are interested in the functions and health benefits of prebiotics and intestinal microflora.

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