Supplement Quality Myths and Global Sourcing

Because there is a widespread belief in the supplement world that Chinese source ingredients are inherently suspect, lower quality, more likely to be contaminated or adulterated, less trustworthy than domestic or European alternatives.

I understand where this comes from because there have been real documented problems. Some of them have being serious and there's a reputation for Chinese goods because of that.

But here's what that framing misses entirely. A significant portion of the global supplement ingredients supply chain comes from China. Vitamins B and C, amino acids, a huge range of botanical extracts, ingredients and products from brands you already trust.

solar ray, natural factors, and a hundred other brands that you probably have some of in your cabinet at home right now are getting materials from China.

Nobody brags about it because it doesn't sound good. but it is just the global manufacturing reality. The question is, does it matter? Welcome to Vitality Radio, the podcast that helps you make sense of natural supplements and thrive without pharma drugs.

I'm Jared St. Clair. I grew up in a health food store and spent over 40 years now figuring out what works and what doesn't so that you can make confident, informed decisions about nutrition, supplements, and your health.

You've probably seen it, third party tested, CGMP certified, NSF certified maybe even NSSF for sport. These phrases show up on supplement labels constantly and they're used in a way that implies safety, quality, legitimacy.

And sometimes they do mean exactly that. But here's what I want to talk about today because not all of these phrases mean the same thing and the gap between them can be significant.

If you're spending real money on supplements, which I know you probably are, and making real decisions about your health, you deserve to actually understand what you are looking at.

So today I aim to kind of peel back the curtain, like I often do on this show and help you understand exactly what your looking when it comes to certified, third party tested, that kind thing.

What prompted the show was a woman who had never shopped with us before, had heard our podcast. And I think just once this show really didn't know me from Adam and had questions and called the store and asked about our third party testing and what that actually meant.

And if, you know, we had certifications and all that kind of stuff. I actually had a long conversation with her much longer than I anticipated. And I thought, you know what?

This is something that I should have done a Long time ago. I've talked about it kind of in bits and pieces, but this episode I'm going to do in I think 20 minutes or less.

What CGMP Means for Supplement Manufacturing

What I think is going to really help you understand as a consumer, exactly what you need to understand about third party tested, CGMP, NSF. What does that actually mean?

What part is science, I guess, versus what part of marketing? And we're going dig into that in some detail. We're

also going talk about what made in China means.

What made in the USA means, what made an India means where these raw materials come from and why it matters. And that answer that I'm going to give you might surprise you.

Let's start with CGMP. What does it actually mean? Well, it stands for current good manufacturing processes. The GMP is the most important part, but current just means that it's an evolving thing.

It's not a set in stone back in 2007. When it started, it has actually been adjusted since then. These rules cover facility cleanliness and equipment calibration, testing for raw ingredients before they go into the product, documentation of every step in the manufacturing process, batch records, employee training, and quality control checkpoints throughout production.

And it's an FDA formalized program for dietary supplements specifically. The core idea is that CGMP compliant facilities can demonstrate with documentation that they put on the label what is actually in the product.

That the project is free from contamination and that the process is consistent from batch to batch. Meaning you bought a bottle from this lot number and you buy a model from that lot.

It's the same stuff, just made it a different time. Here's the part that should give you a little bit of pause though. The FDA requires technically CGMP compliance for supplement manufacturers, but the FDA does not pre-approve supplements before they hit the market.

And FDA facility inspections happen, not on any kind of predictable every year schedule or every facility out there. Which means some facilities are never actually tested at all or visited or inspected, I should say.

Which means the legal requirement is technically real, but the verification isn't always as tight as you might hope. It's kind of like driving. If you're driving at, you know, 85 and a 65 mile an hour highway, unless the cop sees you, You're going to be just fine and you'll be able to drive 65 all the way.

And that's part of the Wild West that can be the supplement industry. Now for brands that are doing it right. Which I'm going to explain exactly what that means here in a minute.

It's not a problem. And that's why you need to know the brand that you're buying from. So this is exactly why third-party audits matter. When a facility is CGMP compliant and has been independently audited by a credible third party, that meaningfully is more credible than a self declaration.

because anybody can literally print CGMP facility on a label, but not everyone can actually pass an outside audit. Now let's talk about NSF GMP certifications.

NSSF International has been around since 1944. They actually started in water treatment and food safety long before they did anything with supplements.

Their G&P certification program for supplement manufacturers though is genuinely rigorous. It's not a rubber stamp. All of our products are manufactured in NSF GMP certified facilities.

And I want to explain what that actually means because it's more involved than most people actually realize. and you as a probably more informed than.

Most consumers are, if you're listening to this show, at least I hope you are and feel like you've getting some education here and probably from other sources as well.

You've probably heard of NSSF. you probably. Heard of CGMP and. Third-party testing, but maybe haven't had it all. totally explained to you. That was kind of what I got out of this phone call and why I decided I better share it with everybody.

So earning NSF GMP certification is not a one-time event. Facilities have to recertify on an ongoing basis, essentially every single year. NSF auditors are physically on site.

This is not done through email. They're reviewing equipment, they're looking at processes, documentation, how raw materials are received and tested, How finished products are tested.

How deviations and complaints are handled. The facility has to demonstrate every time that it's still operating at the standard it was initially certified to do.

If it doesn't, the certification doesn' get renewed. I get an annual report from my manufacturers. I can access it basically at any time that shows their current certification.

And basically they either are or they're not certified. If one of my manufacturer was ever to become not-certified, I would definitely be looking at other options, but thankfully that's not happened with my manufactures.

And I'll be straight with you on this.

NSF GMP Audits and Annual Recertification

It's not a cheap process. NSF certification and the ongoing recertification process is a real expense for manufacturers. it costs money to prepare for the audits, to maintain the documentation systems, To run the internal quality controls required to pass and to keep the equipment working properly and all of that stuff.

And that cost ultimately flows through to me and then to you. But I'm fine with that. In fact, I am grateful for it because what that cost buys me is the confidence that an independent, credible organization is looking over the shoulder of the people making your supplements on a regular basis.

Not just once when they first applied and opened up shop, but Every single year on a regular basis, they're having to recertify and verify that they are doing things right.

That expense keeps the manufacturer honest. A certification that's easy and cheap to get isn't going to be worth much. The fact that this one isn' easy is really the whole point.

Now, I wanna explain also a little bit more of how this actually happens inside of a facility. What happens in a facilities that's doing it right? At my facilities, beyond the facility certification itself, i wanna walk you through kind of the process from start to finish.

Layer one is the raw material quarantine and testing. When an ingredient arrives in the facilities let's say it's NMN or vitamin C or resveratrol or magnesium bisglycinate, whatever it is, It doesn't get opened and poured into a batch.

It goes into what's called quarantine. And each manufacturer has a quarantine section where things are held kind of in jail for lack of a better term.

That means that it's physically held and cannot be used until it passes independent testing. They verify the incoming raw material against the supplier's certificate of analysis, confirming the identity.

This is really important with herbs because An herb can look like another herb, especially when it's already in a powder form and we're not looking at the leaf or the root.

We're looking in green powder in most cases or a brown powder. And so the identity matters a lot. The potency obviously matters. and then of course, you know, what else is in it?

Is it contaminated with mold or fungus? is there any bacterial or microbial contamination? Are there too many heavy metals, any of that kind of stuff?

Only after it clears that testing, does it get released into production. This is not universal in the industry. There are manufacturers who accept raw materials based on the supplier's paperwork alone and never independently verify that it is what they say it.

Or that is a potency that they claim that. That gap is one real reason why products from different brands using the same ingredient on paper can perform very differently in practice.

Now, layer two is the manufacturing side and the NSF audited environment. Once raw materials clear quarantine, they're processed inside a facility that has been audited against NSF GMP standard, which also incorporates the FDA's core dietary supplement manufacturing regulations, plus food safety and traceability requirements.

Every step has documentation. There are batch records and standard operating procedures. If something goes wrong at any point, there is a trail. Layer three is the finished product testing.

So if all of that is not enough after the product is manufactured, before it ships, finished batches go out to third party testing facilities, microbial testing and heavy metal testing.

Microbial looking for anything, any kind of microbe that might be in there. This is a separate step from everything else and it matters. Why does finished product testing matter even after all of the above has already happened?

Because you can start with clean raw materials and a clean facility and still end up with an issue that emerges during the manufacturing process itself.

Cross contamination, equipment factors, environmental variables, finished-product testing is the final confirmation that what came out the other end is actually what it's supposed to be, both in terms of what's in it and what isn't.

Put those three layers together, incoming raw material quarantine and independent testing, manufacturing inside an NSF audited and annually recertified facility, and finished product third party testing.

And you have a quality system with multiple independent checkpoints. Each layer is designed to catch something the others might miss. That is exactly the point.

Now, NSF GMP versus NSSF for sport. Have you heard of these two things? You might be familiar with just ingredients. They have protein powders that are NSN for sports certified and protein Powders.

That are not. If you haven't caught Carl in talking about this, why do you think this is? It gets a little confusing for sure. And also I can tell you that our products are made in an NSF facility, but they will not say NSS on the bottle.

and I'll explain why that matters in just a minute. So this is where I want to spend a bit of time because it can get a lot confusing. But I think I've got it simple enough that it's all going to make sense.

NSF GMP certification, which is what my facilities carry, covers the manufacturing environment itself. The facility audit, the processes, documentation, raw material testing, all that kind of stuff.

NSSF for Sport, or its older sibling, NSC certified for sport, is a different program entirely. It was built specifically for competitive athletes who are subject to drug testing.

Products that go through this program are screened against a list of over 270 substances banned by major sports organizations. WADA, the NFL, The NCAA, MLB, and so on.

Stimulants, steroids, hormone precursors, masking agents. The idea is that an athlete can look at a product with that certification and know it won't trigger a positive test.

And it's not like there's a bunch of products that have steroids added to them out there on the market.

Raw Material Quarantine and Finished Product Testing

There are things people have been busted for that before. But there are things like stimulants, certain types of stimulant, hormone precursors like DHEA, which are not legal in the sporting world, but are legal on the shelf that make NSF sport certification a different animal.

So for that population, people are actually drug tested. It's a genuinely valuable program. If you're a professional or collegiate athlete and the failing a drug test could cost you your career, then you really want that assurance, right?

But the honest question is, is that you? For the vast majority of people listening to this show, you're not subject to water testing or NCAA testing. Are you competing at a level where a contaminated supplement would cost you your season?

You know, probably not, right? So here's where it can get practical, and this is part of it that's important. I already said I'm okay with the expense of NSF certification and third party testing and all that, because I want to make sure that my manufacturer is not cutting corners.

What I believe is in the product when I formulated it and ordered it is what's in product so that I can look you in eye and tell you that that is exactly what it.

However, can you actually go further than you need to with some of the certification? Because if I were to certify everything in SF sport, that would be an additional layer.

If I are to certified everything with the NSF badge, That would an addition layer and for what we do, I don't think it's worth it. It's worth it to make sure that all of those other things are taken care of, but basically all that certification and verification for me is enough without driving the cost of the product up higher just to put a badge on the label.

So when you're already manufacturing at the NSF GMP certified facility that independently tests incoming raw materials and does all those things, Formalizing it by putting a logo on it to me is just an expense that is unnecessary.

We've made a deliberate decision not to pursue product level NSF or NSS for sports certification for that reason. Because for me, when I'm looking at supplementation, I am looking a few things.

I absolutely 100% need quality and I need verification that what I say is in the product What you're reading on the label is what is there. As long as I'm comfortable with that, I don't need an NSF on my label specifically on that one product.

just so that I have to charge you an extra dollar or two or whatever. At that point for me, it's more marketing than anything else, unless you are a collegiate or an Olympic or a professional athlete.

If you, are frankly, that NSF sport certification matters for everyone else. I think it is overkill. Now, I want to talk about something that is frustrating for, me.

Like so frustrating for me and frustrating. And it sometimes makes you frustrated with me. We've been out of two very, very popular products. Now, by the time this show airs, they both should be back in stock crossing fingers.

One of them is my second most popular product that I sell the ultimate vitality multi. The ultimate vitality multi really our flagship product. It's the one that of everything that I sell is probably the most well-known for.

And when it's out of stock, it hurts in a variety of ways. it. Hurts financially because I can't sell it and it, hurts from a credibility standpoint, because you're looking at me saying, what is this guy?

Is he professional or not? Why can he keep this great product in stock? What's going on here? The other product is Inamen powder, Vital Inamin. So let's talk about the NMN first.

We've been out of stock on that. As I'm recording this show, we've, been at a stock, on, that product for nearly two months that I'd like to say it's inexcusable, but I actually have an excuse.

And let me explain how that works. This product has two ingredients, two, the ultimate vitality multi has so many ingredients. Dozens, Two ingredients in the MN powder.

One of those is NNM and the other one is resveratrol. Well, guess what? We want those two ingredients in there because they work synergistically together.

They make a lot of sense. they have this awesome complimentary mechanism. But when this product was brought into the manufacturer, one of the two, ingredients did not pass the testing.

And that's the resveratrol. Resverotrol did not pass the test in that it had excess microbial content. Basically it was above what is considered a safe level of microbio stuff for lack of a better term.

NSF Sport Certification vs GMP Certification

Okay. Now here's, the interesting thing. Truth be told, what was in there at the amount that is in, there probably would not make anybody sick. It's just was a little bit above the legal limit.

And if we weren't NSF certified or simply weren' t honest, we could have snuck it through. We could've sold it to you and said, here's our product. I wouldn't have been concerned about anybody getting sick, and I wouldn't have any angry customers, but I'm not gonna do that.

First off, if I wanted to do, that I couldn't because NSF certification, third-party testing, my manufacturer is being kept honest by that, and, I am being, kept, honest, by, now, If I was making it in my own back room, then yeah, could pass it off.

But I want you to understand that distinction, it matters, like it, matters a lot, right? If I was the kind of guy who said, I got to have this product on the shelf.

I'm going to lose hundreds and hundreds. And hundreds of dollars really in two months, multiple thousands of and sales on this one product. That hurts.

might not get those sales back. There's a really good chance that somebody probably multiple, somebody's listening to this show right now. Maybe you has been waiting for that in a minute and finally gave up and said, I want to get my NMN somewhere else.

Can't get this from this guy. and I love NNM I wanna be on it. And I may have lost that sale and I mean, not have loss that sail just once. I might have you for the rest of the life of you taking that in a min product.

But I specifically work with manufacturers that have all of these certifications, verifications these checks and balances in place. Because I don't want them to cheat me and me accidentally cheat you.

And I'll ever want to be tempted myself to pass something through that I shouldn't be passing through. Now I like to say that, I think I would ever do that.

But I didn't even have that option. I. Think that's awesome because I made that choice originally when I chose the manufacturers that chose, and it just keeps everybody honest and all of the integrity up.

and all of the checkpoints in place. And unfortunately I've got some angry people because I can't get that product right now. Now, again, by the time this airs, I think that project will be out on the shelf again.

In fact, it's coming in the next week or so, but it has been two months and I have lost some money for sure. I hope I haven't lost any customers. The Ultimate Vitality Multi story is a little different, and honestly, it's a story about

something largely outside of my control, which is our government.

Ultimate vitality multi contains something called solbutiamine. Solbutiamine is not familiar to most people. And I want to explain what it is and why I use it first.

So, solbutiamin is in two of products. It's in my multivitamin and it in product called Downsize. Solbitiamine is a derivative of the B vitamin, vitamin B1, also known as thiamin.

It was developed in Japan in the 60s as a more bioavailable form of B-1 that can actually meaningfully cross the blood-brain barrier way more effectively than regular thiumin does.

It is completely legal in the United States. It has not a controlled substance. Is not on any banned list. it is a completely legitimate, well-characterized compound with research behind it supporting energy, metabolism, and cognitive function.

I use it because it is awesome. I love this ingredient. It is part of the secret sauce that makes people feel so good when they take the ultimate vitality multi.

Stock Issues, Testing Failures, and Product Integrity

You could call it part. Eleven herbs and spices. Okay. Except none of my herbs or spices or MSG like the kernels, but aside from that, it's something that is in that product that you're never going to find in any other multivitamin.

In fact, I have over 5,000 products in my store right now. I. Carried over 25,00 different products over the years. And in that time, i've only ever had four products of 25 plus thousand that have ever contained Solview timing.

Three of them were my formulas. Now two, one of those formulas isn't on the market anymore. It's not commonly used in America and there's a reason for that.

It is outrageously expensive. Is a very expensive ingredient. it comes from Asia. Its made in Japan and it's made China. And it has very good research in that it provides about half the amount of energy that caffeine does, but without being a central nervous system stimulant.

So it has this really cool, unique place that it belongs, that makes it very, very different from anything else. But because it's not used very much, most people have never heard of it.

I almost never run into anybody that knows what the heck Solbutiamine is. And the problem with that is because its expensive and nobody knows, what it is, manufacturers aren't using it because, it doesn't help from a marketing standpoint to have it on your bottle.

I don't call it out on the front of my multivitamin. I won't say with Solbutiamine because nobody would care unless they heard this podcast. It drives the price of multavitamins up significantly.

it just is what it is. But most people that take Ultimate Vitality Multi because of the Summa and the ginsengs and Solbutiamin love how they feel on this product.

And this is whats happened. Its not commonly found in America. This particular batch is coming from China. And that doesn't sound good to you, probably.

It might give you a little pause. We're going to talk about that in just a second and why I believe you need to understand exactly what that means. But because the agents at the port never see solbutiamine.

About once a year, maybe once every other year it gets stuck because the agent has to double check to make sure it's legal in the country and they have to figure out how to verify what it is.

And right now I'm having the longest delay I've ever had getting Solview timing through customs. It's my second most popular product. And there are so many, probably at least now a couple of hundred of you waiting for this product, wondering where the heck it is, asking me every single day on the chat on vitalitynutrition.com and on phone and in person at one of our locations saying, Hey, where is your multivitamin?

The good news is you missed the vitamin. I missed a vitamin! The bad news is I can't do anything about it until they release it. Now they say it could be up to 30 days from about four days, five days ago, six days.

Something like that. When I got that letter. So I might have three more weeks. This show isn't going to air for about for more. We, so I'm hoping it's on the market again, by the time you hear this, let's talk about China.

You've heard, I am pretty sure that low quality supplements come from China, And I want to be very, very transparent about exactly how this works. Because there is a widespread belief in the supplement world that Chinese source ingredients are inherently suspect, lower quality, more likely to to contaminated or adulterated, less trustworthy than domestic or European alternatives.

I understand where this comes from because there have been real documented problems. Some of them have serious and there's a reputation for Chinese goods because of that.

Why China Does Not Automatically Mean Lower Quality

But here's what that framing misses entirely. A significant portion of the global supplement ingredients supply chain comes from China. Vitamins B and C, amino acids, a huge range of botanical extracts, ingredients and products from brands you already trust.

solar ray, natural factors, and a hundred other brands that you probably have some of in your cabinet at home right now are getting materials from China.

Nobody brags about it because it doesn't sound good, but it is just the global manufacturing reality. The question is, does it matter? Well, consider this, We Care Probiotics is one of the largest and most respected probiotic manufacturers in the entire world, and they are based in China.

Their manufacturing standards, their quality controls, they're documentation. These are world-class. And in fact, I would dare say that Chinese companies have to prove at a higher level than their American counterparts that they're doing it right because they already have this black eye on them.

So I'll tell you my new GLP-1 formula. One of the main ingredients in that product is called Glucovantage. It's the dihydro berberine. it is the best berbere on the market, in my opinion, and great quality companies use this particular ber bere, including our friends at Just Ingredients.

They use it. It has acromancia. Acrumancia is primarily coming out of China from We Care probiotics. Solar Ray uses it, we use. Many other companies are using it's not the zip code that this product comes from or however they use postal codes over in China.

What it is. is simply all of the measures that I already talked about that have to be in place to make sure that we are keeping the raw material supplier, whether they're in China or Bountiful Utah, the manufacturer, or the product developer, that would be me, all honest in making sure what we give you is what say we're giving you.

It is manufactured correctly. It is clean. It has free of contaminants. And it is what we say it, is at the potency that we see it as on the finished product.

The verification is, what matters. Did it go through quarantine? Did it pass that test? Is it made in the right facility under the conditions with the certifications?

And is it third party tested again to make sure that nothing went wrong during that process? China, India, America,

Canada, none of it means anything about quality.

Verification means something. Geography does not. I want you to be the best consumer of natural supplements that you can possibly be. That's a huge part of why I do Vitality Radio.

This show is about transparency, pulling back the curtain on an industry that doesn't always make it easy to know what the heck you're actually buying and help you become a wiser, more confident shopper in a marketplace that can genuinely be confusing.

I hope it gives you more confidence in my brand of supplements and in our store, but honestly, more than anything, I help it helps you buy right for yourself and for your family, no matter where you're shopping.

Thank you so much for listening to me. Call us if you have questions, 801-292-6662, or jump on vitalitynutrition.com and open up a chat, Or just come see us in Bountiful or South Ogden at Vitality Nutrition, I'm Jared.

Thanks for Listening to Vitalty Radio. Hello, everyone. I hope you enjoyed this week's episode of Vitality Radio. Just a reminder that this podcast is for educational purposes only.

This podcast has not been evaluated by the FDA. Thank you.