[CLAIMS]

1. An equol-producing microorganism-containing fermented product containing

(A) an equol-producing microorganism in a state of a living cell, and

(B) at least one member selected from the group consisting of ascorbic acid, derivatives thereof and salts thereof,

wherein the (B) component is contained in a range of 0.05 to 5 wt%.

2. The fermented product according to claim 1, wherein the (B) component is contained in a range of 0.05 to 2 wt%.

3. The fermented product according to any one of claims 1 to 2, wherein the pH thereof is 5.0 or lower.

4. The fermented product according to any one of claims 1 to 3, which is selected from the group consisting of soybean drink, fermented soybean food, fermented soybean milk drink, fermented soybean milk food, fermented milk drink, and fermented milk food.

5. The fermented product according to any one of claims 1 to 4, which is distributed or sold under low temperature.

6. The fermented product according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the equol-producing microorganism maintains an equol-producing ability.

7. The fermented product according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the equol-producing microorganism is a lactic acid bacterium.

8. The fermented product according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the equol-producing microorganism is *Lactococcus garvieae*.

9. A method for maintaining the equol production ability of an equol-producing microorganism, the method comprising:

adding at least one member selected from the group consisting of ascorbic acid, derivatives thereof, and salts thereof to a composition containing an equol-producing microorganism, in the state of a living cell at a range of 0.05 to 5 wt%.

10. An equol-producing microorganism-containing fermented product according to claim 1, substantially as hereinbefore described.

11. A method according to claim 9, substantially as hereinbefore described.