

## **Innovation & Reformulation**

The European savoury snacks industry listens to the preferences of the millions of consumers who enjoy our products every day.

Our consumers demand great tasting snacks and treats, excellent value for money, constantly improving nutritional content and of course the highest quality ingredients and finished products.

To meet these expectations European snack manufacturers continually invest millions of Euros into the development of new products, ingredients and manufacturing methods.

But whilst we continue to transform the category to match our consumer tastes, what you may not realise is that many of the innovations and changes have been carried out discretely, and it is only looking at the whole picture that we can see how far we've come.

### **Diversity**

As a food sector we provide one of the widest ranges of products from nuts and seeds, crackers and savoury biscuits, to potato chips and shaped snacks, for an equally wide range of meal accompaniment, treat and snacking occasions.

European savoury snacks manufacturers are proud that their products have always used staple agricultural crops such as potato, maize and wheat as their core ingredients, supporting local farmers, businesses and communities by ensuring demand for their products. And in recent years, complementing these products, manufacturers have expanded their portfolios to offer snacks based upon many other vegetables and cereals such as cassava, rice, oats, rye, pulses, beetroot, carrot and parsnip.

These products offer not only interesting flavours and textures, but also improved levels of fibre and a wider variety of micro-nutrients.

### **Innovative flavours**

The demand for natural flavours, free from artificial components and additives, has led to significant investment over the last twenty years and is reflected in the fact that around one third of all new snacks introductions in Europe currently carry a 'natural' claim.

This includes many of the new and exotic flavours that have appeared on the market, in particular spicy Latin and Asian combinations, such as wasabi, Thai spices, and Mexican chillies such as chipotle and jalapeno.

However manufacturers have not forgotten their European routes and so many of the traditional flavours that we associate with savoury snacks now proudly announce their provenance and naturalness, referencing local ingredients in their flavours such as local cheeses, sea salt, tomatoes, and herbs and spices.

## **Improved nutritional content**

Responding to health concerns around consumers' diets, savoury snacks makers have worked very hard over the last two decades to bring these great flavours and tastes to market whilst ensuring lower overall salt levels, reducing saturated fat and also total fat content in products. The industry's engagement is reflected in our commitment on product development and choice with the [EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health](#) (Action number 1514), which we've held since 2006.

Salt reductions of up to 60% have been reported for some snack products, and in some cases up to 80% reductions in saturated fat.

However, reformulating established products is never an easy task. Consumers are often brand loyal and the slightest change to the texture, taste or smell of a product will be quickly spotted.

Therefore the sector is rightly proud that in so many cases it has successfully taken consumers on a reformulation journey. Incremental changes, particularly targeting mainstream/core products, have been achieved by many manufacturers without alienating consumers and their tastes.

For example in the UK, which remains the largest snack market in Europe, manufacturers voluntarily reduced the amount of salt in standard crisps by over 48% between 1991 and 2013, meaning that currently only 2% of dietary salt intake is derived from savoury snacks. At the same time over 50,000 tonnes of saturated fat has also been removed from the UK diet by manufacturers, meaning that savoury snacks now contribute less than 1% of an average adult's total saturated fat intake.

## **Innovation doesn't just relate to 'taste', and it requires investment**

Reduction in saturated fat levels have been achieved by the sector heavily investing in new commercial cooking technologies. These changes have allowed manufacturers to use less "stable" oils with higher unsaturated fat content without a reduction in shelf-life or product quality.

Another example is the reduction in the energy density of some products through the reduction of the total fat content. This has been achieved by recipe reformulation, usually in conjunction with new frying and baking techniques resulting in fat levels in some products being lowered by up to 65%. We now see that approximately 10% of all 'new' savoury snack products in the market are reduced energy in some way.

Other significant investments by the sector include ongoing work on research projects to breed new potato, wheat, and other vegetable and cereals varieties that are more naturally suited to snack manufacture.

## **Going forward**

The savoury snacks industry is a responsible industry and it continues to invest millions of Euros in developing and improving its products and manufacturing technologies. These innovations continue to provide us with products with vastly improved nutritional contents whilst at the same time meeting consumers' demand great tasting snacks and treats. However a lot has been done and achieved already in the last two decades; hence it proves extremely challenging to continue reformulating at the same pace as before. In terms of salt and fat reduction the industry is reaching its technological limits and further reducing these nutrients might mean that some products simply cannot be manufactured anymore (e.g. baked or extruded products) or organoleptic properties might alter so much that consumers will stop purchasing products.