



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 the highest quality ingredients and finished products.

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

While we continue to transform the category to match consumer tastes and there have been many discrete innovations and changes, only by looking at the whole picture can one see how far the industry has 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 crisps and shaped snacks, for an equally wide range of meal accompaniments, treats 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 pulses (lentils, peas), rice, quinoa, oats, rye, etc.

These products offer not only interesting flavours and textures, but also improved levels of fibre, protein 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 past 20 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 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 in recent decades to bring these great flavours and tastes to market whilst ensuring lower overall salt levels, reduced saturated fat and the total fat content in products. The industry's engagement is reflected in our commitment to product development and choice with the [EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health](#) (Action number 1514), which we have supported since 2006.

Salt reductions of up to 60% have been reported for some snack products, and in some cases up to 70% reductions in saturated fat.

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

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 50% between 1991 and 2013, meaning that currently only 2% of dietary salt intake is derived from savoury snacks. Over the past five years over 10,778 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', it requires investment

Reduced saturated fat levels have been achieved by the sector heavily investing in new commercial cooking technologies. These changes have allowed manufacturers to switch to alternative vegetable oils that are lower in saturated fat, such as sunflower, rapeseed, corn and olive, 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 (e.g. 'popping' with hot air) resulting in fat levels in some products being up to 65% lower. We now see that approximately 10% of all 'new' savoury snack products in the market offer 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 European savoury snacks industry constantly innovates to provide consumers with products with improved nutritional contents whilst at the same time meeting consumer demand for great tasting snacks and treats. However, a lot has been done and achieved already in recent decades, so it is 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.