



Positions

Conditions for Potato Crisps in the Development of Nutrient Profiles July 2009

Summary

The European Snacks Association (ESA) considers that the nutrient profiles proposed by the EC should provide a framework to encourage innovation in all product groups through promoting healthier consumer choices. We welcome DG SANCO's decision to create categories that reflect the importance of a balanced diet instead of stigmatizing individual foods which play an important role in the diet. Potato crisps are potato based products that have their place in the categories established in the nutrient profiles. Due to the challenging thresholds in the current draft profiles only a few best-in-class products of the savoury snacks sector would meet the criteria and bear claims.

As savoury snacks are popular with consumers across a range of eating occasions, it is crucial that information on healthier options remains available at first glance

- Savoury snacks are made with some natural or minimally processed raw materials such as vegetables (e.g. potatoes), grains (e.g. wheat, maize), starch and vegetable oils. Potato crisps comply with the 50% minimum criteria set for products in the Fruit and Vegetables Category.¹ Starchy root and potato products have been prescribed to the category of fruit, vegetables, nuts and their products in the EUROFIR classification that was used by the European Commission when the profiles proposal was prepared. Similarly cereal based products in the savoury snacks portfolio comply with the conditions set in the Cereal and Cereal products category.
- All savoury snack products contain vital nutrients (carbohydrate, fat, protein), micronutrients in the form of minerals, vitamins, and fibre, and offer a quick source of energy. They are popular with consumers across a range of eating occasions. Some European consumers enjoy them on social occasions such as parties. Others enjoy a snack between meals, while others eat savoury snacks when they are on-the-go.
- Public health concerns have increased the demand for products that are reduced in energy, saturated fat and salt. ESA Members have been working hard to meet this demand and improve the nutritional composition of their products.

Profiles categories have to be aligned with other Community initiatives

- ESA members are committed to communicate with consumers on healthier options resulting of reformulation efforts. The engagement of ESA in the Platform for Diet, Physical Activity and Health has been crucial to pursue this ambition.
- While reformulation is right at the heart of our members' innovation and development work, we are concerned that calls for the discrimination of foodstuffs in the implementation of the Claims regulation will have a negative impact on our commitments encouraged by other EU initiatives. Preventing savoury snacks manufacturers from communicating product reformulation and innovation would also mean preventing European consumers from choosing reformulated products, which eventually would result in a retrograde step and discourage efforts to provide consumers with healthier choices.

Challenging thresholds ensure that only best-in-class products will bear claims

- The proposed maximum level of sodium for both the Fruit and Vegetable and Cereal and Cereal products categories in the latest draft proposal from DG Sanco, dated 17 March, is 400mg/100g of product. In our position paper (23 March), we have proposed that the threshold is set at 500mg/100g for both categories. The savoury snacks industry is working hard to reduce levels of sodium in its products by gradually adjusting levels over time so that consumers accept changes in taste. At the level of 500mg/100g, only a few of our products would be able to comply and it would set a challenging, but achievable, target for innovation.
- Also the criteria regarding saturated fats are challenging: 5g/kg threshold proposed by the Commission could only be achieved by those snacks that use healthier oils (e.g. sunflower oil) or are significantly lower in fat.

¹ Fresh potatoes are used to produce potato crisps. It takes about 4 tonnes of potatoes to make 1 tonne of crisps.



European Snacks Association

SAVOURY SNACK INDUSTRY

Positions

The European Snacks Association (ESA) is Europe's only trade organisation dedicated to advancing the savoury snacks industry on behalf of member snack manufacturers and suppliers. Founded in 1956, our members are national and international snack producers and industry suppliers, who together are involved in the manufacture of potato crisps, corn chips /tortillas, pellet snacks, baked snacks, crackers, pretzels, savoury biscuits, popcorn, pork rinds, meat snacks, fruit snacks, peanuts, other snack nuts and various other savoury snacks in this category.

ESA represents member companies' interests at national, European and International level and is proactive in its anticipation and fielding of potential issues of relevance to the industry.

For further information please contact:

Dr Sabine Seggelke

Public Affairs & Policy Director

European Snacks Association

Rue Defacqz 1, 1000 Brussels

T: 0032(0)2 538 2039 F: 0032(0)2 5391575

M: 0032(0)4 74 32 10 59

sabine@esa.org.uk

www.esa.org.uk