

LET'S TALK ABOUT POTATOES

Talking about potato is no hot potato. This is one of the conclusions from a series of food consumer studies in the scope of the research project 'proPotato', funded by Innovation Fund Denmark.

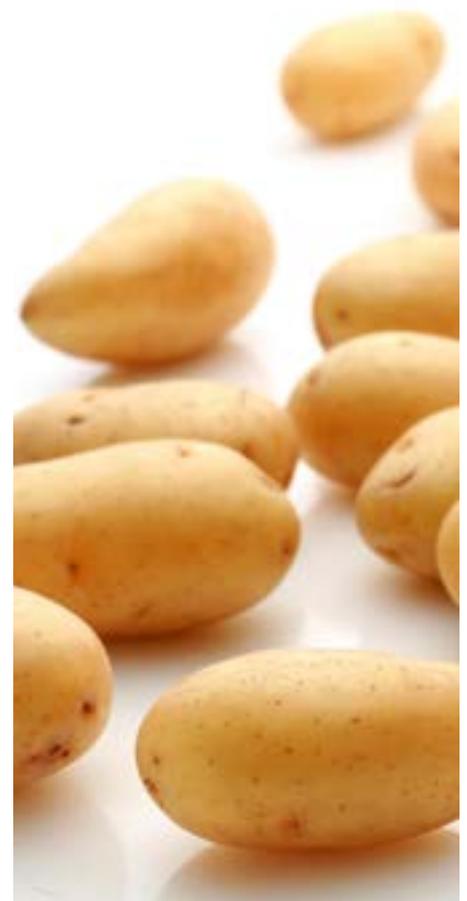
The project explores new ways of extracting and refining potato protein from the side-stream of the Danish potato starch production. Potato protein is currently not used for human nutrition, but has a favorable nutritional profile and could be used for various functions in food – in particular plant-based food innovations. Using potato protein is therefore a contribution to avoiding food waste and improving resource efficiency, and a step towards achieving the sustainable development goals (SDG's).

So, according to the consumer studies there is no need to worry about using this resource, and companies can as well specify the potato origin of protein in the ingredient list. Consumers perceive and categorize potato-based ingredients as rather favorable, and react with a more positive attitude

when they learn the protein in a food is not just any protein, but potato.

However, some things should be kept in mind when developing foods with potato protein. The consumer insights from the studies reveal that when products are presented with a focus on the ingredient of potato, consumers do not yet have quick and elaborate associations about it. This leaves room, though, for companies to suggest associations, and thus to set the agenda through their communication. Consumers can come to think of the product as being expensive and have doubts about the taste – thus, food producers should tackle these concerns upfront. Other consumers, in turn, make a connection from potato protein to potato starch. This might explain why consumers expect a higher calorie content with

potato protein compared to foods with pea or soy protein, and this is not necessarily fa-



vorable for companies. It might also, though, explain why consumers appear to regard the potato-based ingredient as familiar and simple – after all, most have potato starch in their own cupboard, and use it in cooking. In consequence, consumers have an idea why a food producer might need to use a potato-based ingredient as well – for the sake of providing texture to the food, for example. Known ingredients are perceived as good and harmless, which is of course favorable for a food producer who includes the ingredient in the product’s recipe, and transparently writes out where the protein comes from.



Danish consumers are yet hesitant to embrace a ‘potato drink’, even though the market has seen an ex-

pansion into plant-based drinks that now spans from soy over to almond or rice, and even cashew, to name a few. Communicating that the use of potato protein in such a drink has the sustainability benefit of reducing food waste in the supply chain, however, increases favorable attitude towards

the concept. Consumers can react positively when they hear that producers make an effort to ‘upcycle’ and avoid food waste.

A potato-based drink, however, can also make successful use of underlining that it is ‘free from’ for example milk, nuts or soy – as the research indicates. After all, health continues to emerge as a strong driver of and association with plant-based foods. Interestingly, Sweden has seen the market entry of a ‘potato smoothie’ with precisely this unique selling point. Maybe it is time for Danish producers to talk about and use potato protein – once the right procedure for extracting and refining it is in place.

The proPOTATO project started in March 2016 and runs unto 2021. It is a collaboration between Aarhus University, Copenhagen University, Kartoffelmelcentralen KMC, AKV Langholt and DuPont Nutrition Biosciences ApS.



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See also:

<http://mgmt.au.dk/research/marketing/mapp/projects/propotato/>

[http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/projects/propotato\(a8020344-d53e-4dc2-a3bb-dad-192793cf4\).html](http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/projects/propotato(a8020344-d53e-4dc2-a3bb-dad-192793cf4).html)

<https://vegoflund.se/en/products/>