

Preparing our snacking range for HFSS

Shore the Scottish Seaweed Company

SHORE

THE SCOTTISH SEAWEED CO.

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SEAWEED CHIPS

Who we are

As proud growers, harvesters and processors of natural Scottish seaweed, we are introducing seaweed into kitchens, offices and lunch boxes across the nation. We have a growing range of snacks and foods, including seaweed chips, pesto and tapenades.



Why we reformulated

Shore has a range of **seaweed crisps that are high in iodine and fibre** and positioned in the ‘better for you’ category for snacking. We launched them in 2020 and have been successful in terms of listings and awards. From late 2022, England and Wales have new rules **restricting the promotion of High Fat Sugar and Salt (HFSS) products**, and we want our seaweed crisps to fall on the right side of the line for these purposes. As a fried product, our original crisp recipe just exceeded the HFSS scoring threshold, and this would have jeopardised our positioning and market opportunities.

We decided to reformulate the crisps to bring them under the HFSS threshold, with the help of a **£5,000 grant from the Reformul8 Challenge Fund**.

The flavour challenge

The main issue we had to address was how to keep our product ‘integrity’. We wanted to comply with HFSS requirements, but also wanted to **retain the flavour and mouth-feel** that comes from being a fried product.

There was also another consideration for us as a seaweed company: our crisps may be people’s first encounter with seaweed, and we want them to feel positive about it. For this reason too, we didn’t want to compromise on texture or flavour.

“It’s easy to take salt or fat out of a product, but less easy to do that while maintaining the flavour profile. Food – and especially snacking – is about pleasure so you have to take your consumers with you.”

Keith Paterson, Joint MD, Shore the Scottish Seaweed Co

Our approach

To achieve HFSS compliance, there were two key variables we could work on: the vegetable content and the salt content. We’ve looked at both:

- We’ve **increased the vegetable content in all flavours to 80%**, calculated by HFSS rules, by replacing some refined flours with more **quinoa, pea and seaweed**.
- We’ve **slashed the salt content** on our new flavours: they have **1.2g salt per 100g**, whilst the original formulations for flavours like Asian Peking had up to 2.0g salt per 100g.
- We’re also **working with seasoning houses to reduce the salt** in our existing flavours.

Making these changes takes us way below the HFSS threshold, reinforcing the crisps’ positioning as ‘better for you’.

Food and Drink Federation Scotland’s Reformulation for Health programme provides free support to Scottish SME food and drink manufacturers, both FDF members and non-members.

For more details, contact reformulation@fdfscotland.org.uk or visit www.fdfscotland.org.uk.

Tasting trials

After **seven months of reformulation work**, we are happy with the new recipes and flavours, and now waiting for feedback from our virtual tasting panel.

This panel is an idea we came up with during the Covid lockdown, when we could not conduct in-person taste trials. We decided to ask people to **sign up as tasters on our website and social media**, and now have around 200 people signed up. It's a **cost-effective way for a small company to run trials**.

Once we have analysed the tasters' feedback on the crisp samples we sent them, we can make final decisions on both the existing and new flavours.

“Having tasting results gives you confidence when you're talking to buyers: if they query anything about the taste, you can tell them you trialed the product with, say, 60 people and here are the results. It helps you build a persuasive case.”

Keith Paterson, Joint MD, Shore the Scottish Seaweed Co

Our advice to others

There's no hiding the fact that reformulation can be difficult for small companies. It takes a lot of resources to launch – or relaunch – a new product, and it can be expensive to test the recipes in manufacturing facilities.

Thanks to the funding we've received from the Reformul8 Challenge Fund, we're now in very good shape in terms of HFSS rules. We also think HFSS will change the market to some degree: some retailers in Scotland may apply it voluntarily and there may be a tilt towards the healthier snacking. In that sense, HFSS can be an important opportunity for a business like ours.

Having the financial support and access to advice from the Reformul8 Challenge Fund certainly helped, and we would also offer two other tips:

- *Write a clear rationale for what you want to achieve. Reformulation can create real competitive advantage, so it's not just about doing minimal changes for compliance or following the market. Have your eyes open to the potential difficulties involved but also set your sights high.*
- *Get a wide range of people to try the product. Often you're too close to the products, and it's important to get a neutral view. Feedback and data from your taste testing can provide you with confidence to take the product to buyers.*



Shore Seaweed Crisps can be found in major retailers including Tesco, Morrisons, Asda, Sainsbury's, and Co-op stores across Scotland, and in multiple independent retailers UK wide. Find out more about the product, and where to buy, on their website: www.shoreseaweed.com