

## Digestive biscuits *Equilibrio* (Portugal)

### Product developed in EIT Food RIS Consumer Engagement Labs project

There is a Norwegian saying: “*Cookies are made of butter and love*”. Cookies, biscuits, and other small pastries give instant pleasure and comfort; they are easily portable and available far and wide. However, indulging yourself in eating most of the sweet bakery products may be detrimental for your health: they usually contain trans and saturated fats, white sugar, and wheat which is a source of gluten and raise the blood sugar level. If eaten as an innocuous snack, such biscuits may become a significant source of extra-calories in one’s diet. Should one resign from the pleasure and convenience of reaching for a small package of biscuits? Of course not, but only when one does choose the healthy version of this sweet goody.

To find out what kind of food products answer the needs of older adults, the EIT Food project team invited older adults in Portugal to participate in co-creation workshops. The participants developed an idea of innovative biscuits that combine the traditional, attractive taste and healthy ingredients to serve as a convenient snack for older adults and other age-groups.

#### Innovative food product

Biscuits are a typical staple in the Portuguese diet. However, typically, such products usually contain ingredients that the older adults should abstain from (wheat, processed fats, sugar). The innovative character of the biscuits manifests itself in the fact that Digestive Biscuits *Equilibrio* are not a substitute of traditional biscuits but their healthy version. As such, they may become a substantial part of the everyday diet of older adults who still want to enjoy the pleasure of eating a biscuit regardless of the diet restrictions they need to follow.

#### Good for health

The biscuits are produced with the use of rice bran, oats and wholemeal wheat flour instead of white wheat flour, normally used in biscuits. These ingredients make the biscuits particularly advantageous for consumers’ digesting system as rice does not contain gluten and is rich in fibre. They contain sunflower oil instead of the commonly used palm oil which is high in saturated fats. Elimination of the palm oil makes the biscuits also more ecologically friendly. The addition of healthy, unprocessed fats and grains make the taste of the biscuits more subtle as the natural flavours are not suppressed by artificial flavourings that are excluded from the products.

#### Preferred by older adults / Designed by older adults for older adults

Digestive Biscuits *Equilibrio* respond to the needs of various age groups and people of different lifestyles. Their traditional taste suits both adults as well as children. Packing in 4-biscuit portions renders the *Equilibrio* a perfect snack to eat at school, work, or during a trip or walk. The portioning per one serving serves consumers of all age groups. Particularly older adults appreciate the one-size portioning as many of them live alone or only with their partners. Such packaging prevents the excess food waste and helps save money, which is essential for older adults with limited funds at their disposal.

#### Different from existing products

What makes *Equilibrio* biscuits different from other products might not be visible at first glance and by the first bite – and this is actually the most important aspect of its innovativeness. The traditional taste of biscuits has successfully been retained but the ingredients are much better for the health of consumers. They do have all that is healthy (sunflower oil, oats, bran, wholemeal flour) while excluding ingredients that might be detrimental for the nutrition (saturated fats, white wheat flour, artificial sweeteners or flavourings).

### Additional information about the project:

The Balance Biscuits (pt. *Bolachas Equilíbrio*) is a product designed during the co-creation workshops, held as part of the EIT Food RIS Consumer Engagement Labs project. The project is coordinated by the University of Warsaw and financed by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), under the Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe, the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. The project's main aim is to address the needs of older consumers in the food and beverage market by applying novel methodology which engages consumers, stimulates their creativity, and fosters the acceptance of new products. The product concept was designed in 2019 in Portugal during co-creation sessions which gathered older consumers, scientists from INIAV, the National Institute for Agricultural and Veterinary Research, the representatives of food producer Vieira de Castro – Produtos Alimentares S.A, food retailer Continente (Sonae MC group), start-up company Qualiriso and non-governmental organisation APDP, the Portuguese Association for the Protection of Diabetics. Following the co-creation process, the innovative product was developed and introduced to the market in 2021.

Find out more about the project at: <http://timo.wz.uw.edu.pl/cel>