

Marketing for alternative crops

Salt Tolerant potatoes



Contents

Background	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Cultivation	4
Location	4
Seaweed fertilizer:	5
3. Certification & Packaging	5
Certification	5
Packaging	5
4. Promotion & Observation	6
4.1 Supermarket	7
4.2 Direct contact with consumers	8
4.3 Innofest	8
5. Conclusion & Recommendations	10

Background

Acknowledgement

This case study was made possible by SALAD

1. Introduction

Products that are cultivated in salt affected agriculture grounds such as salt-tolerant potatoes are in a very nascent stage of market penetration. There is very limited knowledge in the market on how to promote products such as these products. Salt Farm Foundation is one of the very few organizations that has experimented on different scales in the past to promote products such as salt-tolerant potatoes. Thus, for the project SALAD, Salt Farm Foundation aims to develop a case study of its promotional activities in its home market – Texel, the largest Wadden island located in the Netherlands. This case study will highlight on the challenges and as well as the important enablers to scale up salt-tolerant potatoes in the market.

Salt Farm Foundation developed this case study based on three different sources –

- a. Observing the sale of salt-tolerant potatoes on Texel by WADZILT and Salt Farm Foundation
- b. Through direct contact with visitors on its saline tasting garden and also organizing various tasting sessions.
- c. Participating in Innofest, Leeuwarden¹ to test the market value of Salt-tolerant potatoes.

The organic potatoes were primarily marketed on Texel through a brand – Wadzilt. Wadzilt is a startup that cultivates and sells salt-tolerant products in the Netherlands. The non-bio salt-tolerant potatoes were sold directly under Salt Farm Foundation. Furthermore, the potatoes were fertilized using seaweed fertilizers in order to increase its yield and as well the taste.

¹ <https://www.visitwadden.nl/nl/over-ons/ondernemers/waddenfestival/programma-waddenfestival>

2. Cultivation

Location:

Organic potatoes: The potatoes were cultivated on Texel in an agriculture ground which is certified organic. 0.1 ha of land was used to cultivate organic salt-tolerant potatoes and 1 ton.

Non-organic potatoes: The non-organic potatoes were also cultivated on Texel. About 5 ha of land was used to cultivate salt-tolerant potatoes and there was a yield of about 150 ton.

Salt concentrations used: 6 to 8 ds/m

Seaweed fertilizer:

Both the organic and non-organic potatoes were fertilized with Seaweed fertilizers since from our past research, we observed increase in yield under saline stress.

3. Certification & Packaging

Certification

The organic salt-tolerant potatoes were promoted with three certifications. Certifications were necessary in order to gain trust of people buying a new product in the market. Whereas the non-organic salt-tolerant potatoes were marketed only with Waddengoud certification.

Organic²: The organic salt-tolerant potatoes carried the green EU logo with NL-BIO-01. There was an exemption requested to use seaweed fertilizers since they weren't officially in the input list of SKAL.

² <https://www.skal.nl/>

Waddengoud³: Waddengoud is an organization that certifies products that are grown 100% on the Wadden region in a sustainable manner.

The salt-tolerant potatoes bear the Waddengoud quality mark. This is the quality mark for products and services from the Wadden area and guarantees that the products originate from this area and have been produced in a sustainable way. The main requirements are

1. Raw materials from the Wadden area.
2. Sustainability in production and processing.
3. Processed in the Wadden Sea region.

Basic Requirements: In order to obtain a certification , a specific potato varieties must be grown that have been determined to be salt tolerant through field trials must be cultivated, of which it has been established through field trials that they are salt tolerant (definition: Electrical conductivity ≥ 4 dcS/m) and of which it has been established through taste tests that they are taste and nutritional value (content) are at least equal to those of a typical non-salted an average, non-salt-tolerant, consumption potato.

Seed potatoes for the salt-tolerant potatoes (intended for consumption) must originate from the from the Wadden region.

Sustainably produced by the North Sea Region: The organic salt-tolerant potatoes carried the SalFar – North Sea certification for Salt-tolerant products. The new brand “**Sustainably produced by the North Sea Region**” was also piloted for the first time in the product packaging.

Packaging

Organic potatoes: The potatoes were packaged in a sustainable packaging as shown in the picture. Based on our target customer, it is generally observed that they pay more attention to the packaging as well.

³ <https://www.waddengoud.nl/waddengoud-keurmerk/>



Figure 1: Packaging of the Salt-tolerant potato (1kg)



Figure 2: Packaging of the non-organic salt-tolerant potato (1kg)

Non-organic: The non-organic potatoes were packaged by a potato distribution centre which also took care of logistics. This allowed faster distribution of potatoes and helped to reduce the cost by half. But the packaging used for this is not as sustainable as the packaging used for the organic potatoes.

4. Promotion & Observation

The promotion of salt-tolerant potatoes was done from august 2021 to December 2021. Whereas the sale of non-organic salt-tolerant potatoes was done between January 2022 and March 2022. Promotional materials were created to explain more about salt-tolerant potatoes.

4.1 Supermarket

Salt Farm Foundation had multiple discussions with the country management of Jumbo supermarket in the Netherland. It was first agreed upon with them to focus on the local market (Texel) and observe the promotion. This will help to iron out the logistics and as well as estimate the market potential before launching nationwide.



Figure 3: Discussion with Jumbo supermarket management and representatives

Salt Farm Foundation advised WADZILT on how to promote salt-tolerant potatoes in the market. With this advice, WADZILT was able to approach the local supermarkets to place the products for promotion. The supermarkets were given access to an exclusive section on the website of WADZILT to place orders of the potatoes every time their stocks run low. WADZILT and Salt Farm Foundation together maintained regular contact with the supermarkets to get feedback and to iron out the challenges in the promotion.

Observation: Our potatoes sold very well in the supermarket. We had about 2000 visitors to our website through the QR code that was in the packaging. Supermarkets were very positive about the quality of the products and also the time it took for them to finish the stock each time. They also gave positive feedback on the packaging and the available certification.



Figure 4: Organic Salt-tolerant potatoes in the supermarket



Figure 5: Non-organic Salt-tolerant potatoes in the supermarket

4.2 Direct contact with consumers

During the summer, we organized regular tours for the locals, tourists and students at our location on Texel. During these tours, we offered insight into saline agriculture, the SalFar project and as well about salt-tolerant potatoes. Participants were also offered Salt-tolerant potatoes after the tour. We made note of various questions that were asked by the participants and also feedback provided to us.

We also organized different tasting sessions of saline produces which also included salt-tolerant potatoes.

Observation: The participants were generally very positive about the products such as salt-tolerant potatoes. They see it as an innovative and necessary product for the future. The participants found it also important to have

certification for salt-tolerant potatoes. According to them, this would increase the possibility to buy the product without too much worry about the quality and safety of the product. There were a lot of questions with regards to the nutritional value of the product. We didn't have this with us but based on the past analysis, there is not much increase in the sodium content of the potatoes.

Based on the qualitative feedback received from over 500 participants in 2021, 80% of the participants would pay a higher premium for such products and would want them to be more readily available in the supermarkets across the Netherlands.

About 50 participants also got to taste the potatoes at our location, their feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

4.3 Innofest

WADZILT and Salt Farm Foundation participated in Innofest Wadden Edition, Leeuwarden in November 2021. Innofest allows entrepreneurs to test their innovative prototypes in practice. This happens at festivals and other living labs: test locations that come as close to reality as possible and are therefore very suitable for validating assumptions. Innofest often works on behalf of the government and public organizations. Before participating in the event, we were also part of three online workshops which allowed us to fine-tune the value proposition of Salt-Tolerant potatoes and develop the hypothesis that can be tested at the event. At the event, we talked with different participants who are often comprised of early adopters, entrepreneurs, business people who are primarily focused on sustainable and future proof solutions. We were also asked a lot of questions with regards to the nutritional value of the potatoes in comparison to the ones grown normally.



Figure 6: Marc van Rijsselberghe (Salt Farm Foundation) discussing the salt-tolerant potatoes at Innofest.

Result: Following are the feedback based on about 43 participants

- The most important factor for the participants to buy the potato would be the taste. Followed by supporting regional products.
- The cost they would pay for the salt-tolerant potato would be €2,7.
- About 43% of the participants would pay a euro extra if it will be used for more research and make such a product mainstream.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

In general salt-tolerant potatoes were promoted on Texel very well, about 1200 Kg of organic potatoes were sold in total through three different promotion points out of which about 600Kg of potatoes were through the supermarkets.

About 300Kg non-organic potatoes were promoted on Texel during the mentioned period, about 253 kg was through the supermarket. During the promotion, there was also a small setback in terms of misunderstanding of the pricing. This could have an impact on the promotion of non-organic potatoes in the supermarket.

The feedback in general we received from the consumers were overwhelmingly positive with regards to the product. Supermarkets were also positive about the potatoes and are willing to always stock it up all year long. Both the consumers and supermarkets appreciated the use of the certification in the product packaging, this really helps to remove the threshold of buying a new product.

With the name “zilte aardappel” in Dutch, which translates to “Salty potatoes”, can be a challenge in promotion since a lot of people associate salt with more sodium contents. For this a more extensive nutritional analysis need to be performed and be provided in the packaging. This will further improve the sales of the product.

For increased adaptation salt-tolerant potatoes, scaling up the production is very important. This will not only improve the adaptability but also the cost of the product will also become less, as mentioned in the section 4.3, early adopters are willing to pay about €2,7, this means an average consumer will be willing to pay even less because there is at the moment no necessity to consume salt-tolerant potatoes.

We were able to bring the cost down for non-organic potatoes, but this eventually increased the question about how safe this product for consumption is.

We are working together with students from Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein to look at the improvements that can be made in the supply chain.

But it is very important to continue working on the promotional activity of salt-tolerant crops, without which when there is a need for such product there won't be any right knowledge on how to promote such products. It is thus essential that people are aware of such products that would very well be on their plates in the future⁴.

4

<https://www.wur.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/onderzoeksinstituten/environmental-research/show-wenr/zo-gro-en-kan-nederland-en-de-wereld-eruit-zien-in-2120.htm>

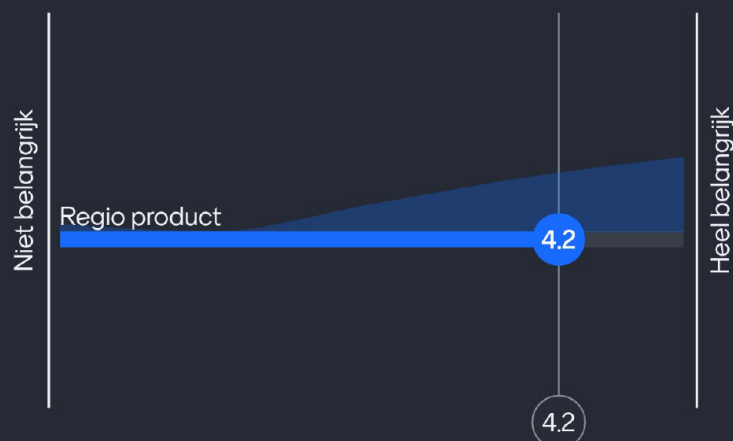


Appendix

Innofeest – results

Hoe belangrijk vind je het dat een product uit de regio komt?

Mentimeter



Wat proef je?

Mentimeter

Meer puurheid

Ziltige smaak

Veel smaak

Aardappel

Vers puur

Niet anders ..

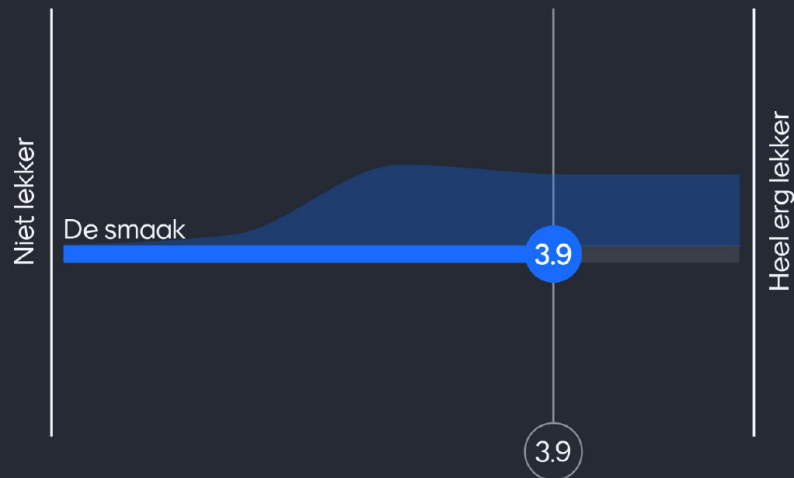
Zoet zout en umami

Weinig meer dan standaard

Grond

Wat vind je van de smaak?

Mentimeter



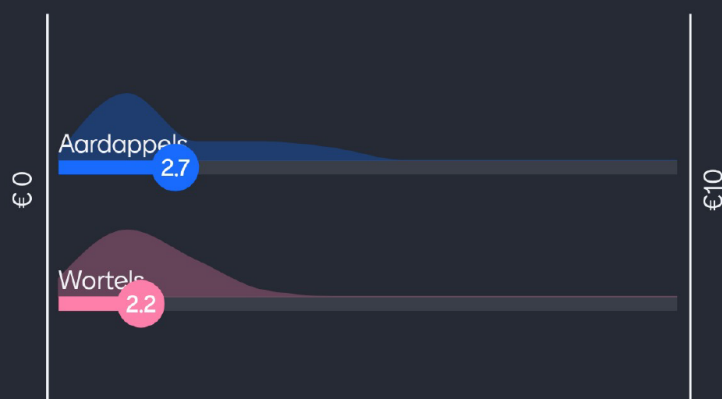
Welke smaaktonen komen het meest naar voren bij de aardappel?

Mentimeter



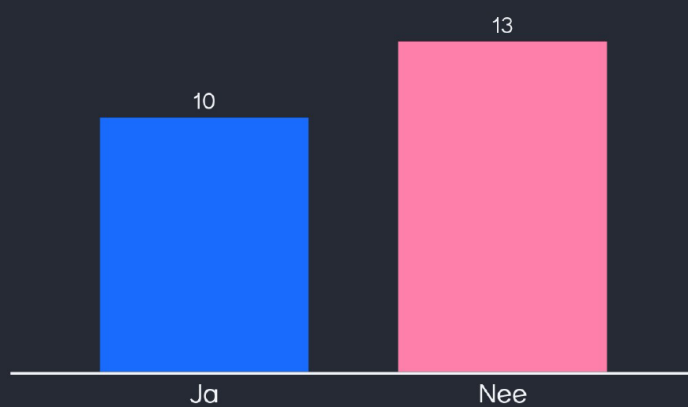
Wat zou je hier voor een kilozak aardappels / wortels betalen?

Mentimeter



Zou je een euro extra betalen om verzilting in andere landen die daardoor getroffen worden tegen te gaan?

Mentimeter



Welke eigenschap vind je het meest belangrijk bij een product als dit?

Mentimeter



Wat wilt u nog kwijt over de wortel of aardappel?

Mentimeter

Hutspot

Zorg aan besteden

Behouden op puurheid

Maak het voordeel inzichtelijk

Als de aardappel zouter smaakt, zit er dan ook meer zout in de aardappel? Zou ik me afvragen bij het kopen

Ik zou toch nog werken aan rassen/teeltwijze die een bijzonderder smaak op kan leveren.

Niet bijzonder genoeg

Students - Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein

