

# **Characteristics of the industry, constraints in processing, and marketing of potato crisps in processing, and marketing of potato crisps in Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

There has been an increase in the number of potato crisps processors in Kenya in the last few decades. However, the characteristics of these firms are not clearly known. This study was designed to characterize the potato crisps processing industry in Kenya in terms of varieties used, pre-processing handling practices and constraints encountered. The potato crisps industry was surveyed between December 2009 and February 2010 using a structured questionnaire. Using labels of a total of 24 brands of potato crisps found selling in 80 supermarkets and kiosks in Nairobi, the processors were identified, contacted, visited and interviewed. Together 23 processors were identified and these had processing plants in Nairobi and Nakuru. The information collected included size of firm, range of products, constraints in processing crisps, marketing of the product and the variety of potatoes processed. The number of employees in the processing industries ranged from 2 to 250; 61 % of the processing firms had 5 or less employees, 22 % had 6-10 employees and only 4 % had 100 or more employees. In addition to potato crisps, 60 % of the firms also processed peanuts, 30 % processed chevda and potato sticks, 26 % processed pop-corns, 13 % processed banana crisps, 9 % processed cassava crisps and 4 % also processed arrow roots crisps, spices, peas and herbs. About 4 % identified the main constraints as lack of proper equipments and market, 64 % complained of lack of potatoes and its poor quality while 43 % indicated lack of finances to increase volume of production. As pertains to produce sales, 83 % of the processors sell their products directly to supermarkets, 4.3 % through wholesalers and 13 % directly to individuals and shops. Dutch Robjyn was the potato cultivar of choice for many processors and other cultivars were used in processing during periods of scarcity of cv. Dutch Robjyn. A large number of processors (70 %) stored their raw potatoes for relatively short periods of time ranging from 2 days to 3 weeks. A few (30 %) processing firms, stored potatoes for a month or longer. The potato crisps processing industry in Kenya is largely dominated by small scale processors who process crisps only as one of a diversity of other products. The industry is faced with several constraints including raw potato price fluctuations, scarcity and poor quality of potatoes, lack of facilities, skills and information on raw potato storage. The industry relies heavily on one variety that is not always available for all the processors. This information is important for potato breeders and post harvest technologists to avail sufficient suitable potato cultivars for crisping.