

■ Tekst 11

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“Spud-u-lite” leads fightback against “Atkins effect”

By Maxine Frith Social Affairs Correspondent

The humble spud has seen its popularity slump in the face of the surging success of the Atkins diet, which demonises the vegetable as a fattening food.

Now the potato industry appears to have decided that if it cannot beat them, it had better join them. A Dutch seed company has developed a "low-carb" spud which it claims is "the future of the potato".

Potatoes are among the banned substances on the Atkins diet, which advocates a high-protein, low-carbohydrate food regime. The new variety has yet to be formally named but has already been called the "spud-u-lite" by its inventors. They claim it contains a third less carbohydrate than normal potatoes and has an "exceptional" flavour.

The new breed is believed to have reduced carbohydrate levels because it has a lower density of flesh and matures over a shorter time. It was developed as a result of cross-breeding, but its low-carbohydrate properties were discovered by chance by researchers at the HZPC seed firm. A co-operative of potato growers in Florida is planning to mass-produce the variety for the American market but it is not known when the vegetables could be on sale in Britain.

Atkins Nutritionals, the company behind the diet, was sceptical about the "spud-u-lite". A spokesman said: "Normally we wouldn't recommend potatoes. It sounds as if you could eat these potatoes during the later stages of the diet, once you have reached your target weight." The low-carb spud is the latest attempt by potato industry to fight back against the "Atkins effect". Sales fell by 4 per cent last year, with much of the loss blamed on the surging popularity of the Atkins regime. The British Potato Council is planning an anti-Atkins campaign this summer, with the slogan "fab not fad" in an attempt to lure people back to the vegetable.

More than three million people in the UK are thought to be following the diet. It allows people to eat as much protein as they want but bans carbohydrates for the first few weeks and restricts them thereafter.

Potatoes are not the only losers in the Atkins age: sales of bread and pasta have fallen, while profits for protein-rich foods such as red meat have increased. Nutritionists have criticised the diet and a Florida businessman last week said he was suing the company after his cholesterol levels soared while following the regime.

But recent medical studies published in respected academic journals have concluded that Atkins adherents lose weight more successfully than conventional dieters.

Lees bij de volgende opgaven steeds eerst de vraag voordat je de bijbehorende tekst raadpleegt.

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“Spud-u-lite” leads fightback against “Atkins effect” (kop)

^{1p} 44 □ Wat is het “Atkins effect” zoals bedoeld in deze kop?