

Dietary Sodium/Salt Reduction in the Americas 2011 Statement of Rio de Janeiro

We, representatives of public health authorities, the commercial food industry and civil society, participants at the Pan American Health Organization and World Economic Forum private session on Creating Healthier Environments and Lifestyles in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 27 April 2011

Taking into account:

- That, where data are available, people in the Americas, adults and children, are known to be over-consuming sodium/salt
- That there is consistent scientific evidence linking excessive sodium/salt intake with high blood pressure and that the relationship between sodium/salt intake and blood pressure is direct and progressive
- That lowering blood pressure by reducing dietary sodium/salt at the population level in low, middle and high income countries can reduce premature deaths due to cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and kidney disease and reduce the expenditures for treating high blood pressure and the conditions to which it is directly related
- That under different circumstances, the most important sources of sodium/salt in the diets of people in the Americas are sodium/salt added at the table and in cooking and the food products manufactured by the food industry and prepared by food service establishments where the sodium/salt is added before the products are sold
- That in 2008 a number of multinational food and non-alcoholic beverage companies made a global commitment to the World Health Organization to reformulate existing food and beverage products such that consumers have options
- That the food industry acknowledges that it can and should contribute to the overall reduction of daily sodium/salt intake across the Americas
- That in countries elsewhere, e.g. the United Kingdom, the food industry and food service establishments are demonstrating that lowering the salt content of their products through reformulations and new formulations is possible and is underway

AND

- Taking into account that the internationally recommended level of dietary salt intake is less than 5 g salt (2,000 mg sodium)/day/person and that the Pan American Expert Group for Dietary Salt Reduction is advocating 2020 as the target date for countries in the Americas to reach the recommended intake or national targets where they exist

Express the following:

That governments, all sectors of the food industry and civil society coordinate their efforts to raise consumer awareness of the harmful effects of excessive dietary sodium/salt intake, educate consumers such that they can effectively participate in reducing the over-consumption of dietary sodium/salt and encourage consumer demand for affordable low/no salt food products;

That nutrition labels on processed foods be mandatory including the declaration of the content of sodium/salt and that governments use common market platforms in the Americas to harmonize labelling requirements;

That governments should in collaboration with the research community undertake monitoring and data collection on: the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the public regarding dietary sodium/salt; population level sodium/salt intake; the sources of dietary sodium/salt in the diet; and food composition data;

That the food industry provide additional current and accurate food composition data/nutrition labels such that dietary sodium/salt reduction initiatives are informed and facilitated;

That governments and the food industry meaningfully engage in dialogue facilitated by the Pan American Health Organization and World Economic Forum to develop an overarching comprehensive action framework for the region that complements existing regional and national efforts for dietary sodium/salt reduction and reflects the elements agreed to in this statement. Important aspects to facilitate will be reformulation target setting and transparent ways to measure and evaluate industry and sodium/salt reduction programmes' achievements.

We thus consider this statement as a first and very important consensus position involving governments in the Americas, all sectors of the food industry and civil society regarding our respective roles and responsibilities in dietary salt reduction.

Below: the list of members of two ad hoc working groups on salt reduction at the Rio de Janeiro World Economic Forum-PAHO private session, 27 April 2011

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