SEASONINGS (without salt) GREETINGS!
In the spirit of the festive season, AWASH wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the salt reduction efforts that food companies have made during 2009.

Quick Service Restaurant Industry
Several major players in the fast food industry have joined McDonald’s in efforts to reduce salt this year. Oporto, Subway and Yum! Restaurants have all provided salt reduction action plans to AWASH, highlighting both previous salt reduction achievements and planned efforts for the year ahead. Domino’s pizza has also initiated salt reduction across its product range, particularly in meat toppings.

McDonald’s – has made substantial progress during 2009 in reducing salt in key products, including a 39% reduction in tortillas, 22% in their seared chicken and 35% in their roast chicken pieces as well as providing a range of meals with the Heart Foundation Tick.

Subway – has made considerable achievements in salt reduction during 2009 including 10% reduction in white and wheat bread, a 36% reduction in the Roasted Chicken Patty, and a planned reduction in diced steak of 20%.

Oporto – have reduced the salt content in selected chicken marinades and plan for a further 5-10% reduction in the salt content of the mayonnaise.

Yum! Restaurants – have implemented a 10% salt reduction across KFC chicken products and 20% on chips, with a future goal of offering meals from their core menu that provide <1000 mg sodium. They are also planning a salt reduction in excess of 20% across their pizza range in Pizza Hut in 2010.

Manufacturers
Many food companies have demonstrated huge progress in salt reduction across their product ranges this year. Special mentions go to:

Smith’s Snackfood Company – has committed to the AWASH strategy of 25% reduction in the salt content of snackfood products over 5 years, and has continually demonstrated reductions in key products including potato chips, pretzels and nuts.

Unilever – continues to be a worldwide leader on salt reduction as part of its Nutrition Enhancement Program. It has internal criteria for sodium in new product development, with the aim of reducing population salt intakes to <6g by 2010.

Bakers Delight – Bakers Delight is committed to reducing salt levels across all products over the coming years and will proactively work with AWASH to achieve this. Bakers Delight is currently reviewing the salt content of all products and developing a salt reduction strategy.

Goodman Fielder – has committed to an ongoing salt reduction program in cake mixes, biscuits and pastries, on top of previous reductions in the salt content of table spreads and salad dressings.

George Weston Foods – most recently demonstrating a >10% reduction in sodium across its bakery range and have progressively reduced salt across Tip Top range since 1997 representing a total reduction of over 20%.

This bulletin will be published quarterly to bring stakeholders and supporters up to date with relevant issues.

Further information can be found on the Drop the Salt! Campaign website at www.awash.org.au
Supermarkets

Coles Supermarkets has committed to the AWASH strategy of a 25% reduction in the salt content of its product range over 5 years, having initially demonstrated reductions of 5% in their Housebrand product range.

AWASH also recently met with Woolworths to discuss salt reduction.

Ongoing support from key collaborators

In addition to the efforts of food companies to reduce salt in foods, AWASH would like to acknowledge the ongoing support and advice from a range of organisations including:

➤ Australian Food and Grocery Council
➤ National Heart Foundation of Australia
➤ Healthy Kids School Canteen Association
➤ AWASH Advisory Group
➤ NSW Health
➤ NSW Food Authority
➤ FSANZ

We would also like to thank all our individual and institutional supporters for their ongoing interest and support to the AWASH Drop the Salt! campaign. Finally, from all the AWASH team, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and look forward to more successes in the year ahead!

Shaking news

Angry Angus Burgers!

In November, AWASH released a report showing alarming levels of salt in Hungry Jack’s new Double Angry Angus Burger. The release generated a large amount of media attention, as well as some controversy when Hungry Jack’s changed the nutrition values on the burger’s website following the release; allegedly because the existing nutrition values had been estimated using an extra slice of cheese.

Salt in the diet: the elephant in the room: why health professionals need a shake-up

The Australian Academy of Science, sponsored by the Nutrition Society of Australia Sydney Group, hosted a symposium called Salt in the diet: the elephant in the room: why health professionals need a shake up on the 13th August in Sydney. This symposium aimed to raise consumer and health professional’s awareness of the health consequences of our excessive salt intake and disseminate strategies that can be implemented at a federal, state and community level to reduce dietary salt intake.

Click here to see the symposium report.

Published Articles

New research published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition highlights the baseline levels of sodium in foods available in Australian supermarkets:


AWASH SALT STRATEGY

Food industry engagement

Following AWASH’s Death by Pizza media release earlier this year, two major players in the Quick Food Service Sector, Domino’s and Yum! Restaurants, have committed to salt reduction across their product ranges. Domino’s has reduced the salt in its three chicken products; chicken breast, kickers and wings by 19-20% and its beef product by 18%. Yum! Restaurants has targeted a salt reduction of 10% across all chicken products on the KFC menu and 20% on chips. This change will result in the removal of in excess of 70,000kg of salt from the Australian diet. See the Food Industry page on the AWASH website for further details.

Stakeholder research

AWASH has recently commissioned some external stakeholder research on salt reduction. The specific aim of this research is to undertake a mapping and analysis of stakeholder positions on salt reduction.

Government Engagement

AWASH continues to meet regularly with both State and Federal government department representatives. AWASH welcomes the announcement of the new Food and Health dialogue which it has
been informed will be considering salt targets for a number of key food products including bread and breakfast cereals.

**National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership Grant**

AWASH has recently been awarded a Partnership Grant from the NHMRC to measure salt in the diet, identify the main foods it comes from and determine ways to reduce it. The Government funding will be supplemented by funding and in-kind support from partners including NSW Health and the Australian Food and Grocery Council making a total project budget of 1.6 million over 5 years. AWASH will be seeking additional funding support to maintain current staff and continue its advocacy work.

**National Healthy School Canteens criteria**

The National Healthy School Canteens Project (NHSCP) is part of the Australian Better Health Initiative (ABHI) implementation plan. The NHSCP will assist school canteens to provide healthy food choices and promote good health through healthy eating. AWASH recently provided feedback to the NHSC on their proposed sodium criteria for foods sold in school canteens in Australia.

**Conferences and events**

**International Food Data Conference, October 2009**

Lizzy Dunford gave an oral presentation at the 8th International Food Data Conference held in Thailand from the 1-3rd October this year with a talk titled *Monitoring sodium reduction in Australian processed foods*.

---


---

**High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting, December 2009**

Jacqui Webster presented a talk titled *Cost benefit of salt reduction to complement existing clinical hypertension programs* at the High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia’s Annual Scientific Meeting in Sydney this December.

**Latest Research on Salt and Health**

It is widely known that a low salt diet can help reduce blood pressure. However, more and more research is showing that a low salt diet can have benefits that extend beyond cardiovascular health.

- Link between salt intake and CVD strengthened – In November a meta-analysis was published in the BMJ showing that a high salt intake is associated with significantly increased risk of stroke and total cardiovascular disease. The study demonstrated that each year a 5 g reduction in daily salt intake at the population level could avert one and a quarter million deaths from stroke and almost three million deaths from cardiovascular disease worldwide.
- Fast foods associated with an increased preference for salty taste – Study suggests that the frequent consumption of certain fast foods by young teenagers may be associated with an increased preference for salt taste.

**International Developments**

- New research carried out by Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH) shows that many pasta sauces on sale in the UK, particularly some branded products and those fronted by celebrity chefs, contain much higher amounts of salt than others.
- Research by the UK Food Standards Agency has found that over three quarters of people (77%) are not aware that bread and breakfast cereals are among the top salt-contributing foods in our diet. When asked to pick the top three from a list of the 10 foods that contribute the most salt to our diets, only 13% of people mentioned bread, and 12% said breakfast cereals.
- Following the publication of a study on salt-consumption habits and sources of salt in Portugal, the Portuguese Society of Hypertension spearheaded a mass-media campaign about the harmful consequences of consuming too much salt, which in turn has led to the Portuguese Parliament approving a law restricting the sodium content of processed foods.

---

For further information, to comment on anything in this bulletin or suggest issues for future Drop the Salt! bulletins contact Lizzy Dunford on 02 8507 2529 or email edunford@george.org.au.