

***PAHO SaltSmart Consortium meeting on  
Advancing Harmonization – Agreeing on  
regional targets for the salt/sodium  
content in key food categories***

***3rd Meeting of the SaltSmart Consortium***  
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# Objectives of the Meeting

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- ❑ Build on the experience of countries that have established targets and timelines for salt reduction
- ❑ Use this work to set harmonized maxima targets for the main food categories
- ❑ Details are in the chapter on *Setting Targets and Timelines to Reduce the Salt Content of Foods*, **Salt Smart Americas** (PAHO 2013)
- ❑ Build consensus and facilitate regional harmonization
- ❑ Next steps moving forward ...

# Resource Material Available on WHO and PAHO websites



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Guideline:  
**Sodium intake  
for adults and  
children**



**Technical Advisory Group**

- WHO/PAHO Regional Expert Group for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Population-Wide Dietary Salt Reduction Final Report, 2011
- Second Meeting of the Expert Group with Countries and Partners: Reviewing Advances and Planning the Second Phase (10/2011)
- First Meeting of PAHO Expert Group on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Dietary Salt Reduction (9/2009)
- Mobilizing for Dietary Salt Reduction Policies and Strategies in the Americas: Expert & Country Consultation (1/2009)

[Read More...](#)

**Communication Materials**

- Factsheets
- Communication Materials
- Posters

[Read more...](#)

**Policy Statement**

- Policy Statement: Preventing Cardiovascular Disease in the Americas by Reducing Dietary Salt Intake Population-Wide
- Recomendação para as políticas nacionais: Prevenção das doenças cardiovasculares nas Américas através da redução do consumo de sal para a toda a população (In Portuguese)
- Salt Reduction - List of Endorsements

[Read More...](#)

**Technical Documents**

- PAHO, Salt Smart Americas, 2013
- A Guide for Setting Targets and Timelines to reduce the Salt content of food, 2013
- Questionnaire on Industry Reformulation

[Read more...](#)

**Salt-Smart Americas:**  
A Guide for Country-Level Action

**Less than 5g/day**

**Pan American Health Organization**  
110th ANNIVERSARY

# Guide For Setting Targets and Timelines to Reduce the Salt Content Of Food (PAHO 2013) – Key Concepts



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- ❑ Diets contain excessive amounts of salt - WHO UL target 5 gm salt (NaCl) = 2000 mg sodium (Na)/day
- ❑ Consumers can control the amount of salt they add at the table and in cooking, but most comes from the salt already added in processed and restaurant foods
- ❑ Different approaches have been used by countries
  - Comprehensive targets for all food categories
  - Step-wise approach, starting with priority foods/categories
  - Most are voluntary systems, some with plans to, or have followed up with regulations

# Process that was used by countries to help set their country targets



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- ❑ Reviewed targets set in other countries – drafts, tables, data on means, ranges, min/max
- ❑ Data regarding salt levels in foods in country and major foods contributing sodium to diets
- ❑ Final targets set after negotiations with industry, and input from food technology experts, health and consumer NGOs...
- ❑ Established monitoring and evaluation plans



# Uses of the Guide

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- ❑ For governments and public health authorities to assist them in designing their salt reduction strategies
- ❑ Based on experiences of a variety of countries that have already set targets
- ❑ Share existing targets and timelines (tables for the most common categories and links to full programs)
- ❑ Basis of broader country meeting held Dec 2013 in Mexico City
- ❑ **Foster collaboration and harmonization and support expansion and consistency of targets**



# Starting Points for this meeting



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- ☐ Consensus statement
- ☐ SaltSmart Concept Note
- ☐ Table of harmonized maxima
  - Adapted from the Guide - Appendix 1: Targets and timelines for food categories common in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile and the National Salt Reduction Initiative in the United States (as of January 2013); updated – October 2014

# Different types of targets and approaches that have been used



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- ❑ Averages
  - Simple averages
  - Sales weighted averages
- ❑ Setting Percentage reductions
- ❑ **Setting Maxima**
- ❑ Combined approach with averages, percentage reductions and maxima
- ❑ Labelling of foods - Low and high labelling
  - Sticker/logo for foods that meet the limits
  - Warning symbols on foods that exceed the limit



# Advantages and disadvantages of different types of targets - Averages



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## Averages (Simple averages or Sales weighted)

### ❑ Pros

- Allows flexibility in a category
- Useful for foods with large variety – e.g. cheeses
- Sales Weighted Average (SWA) is the “gold standard” – it adjusts for the sales of products in a category or by food company – therefore encourages reductions in foods with highest sales

### ❑ Cons

- Difficult concept for consumers to understand; easier to judge progress against limits
- Sales data expensive and often ‘proprietary’
- Doesn’t address the highest salt products, or certain sectors – e.g. children's products
- Can’t be applied regionally

# Advantages and disadvantages of different types of Targets - Maxima



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## Maxima

### ❑ Pros

- Sets clear limits for all products
- Often set around the average, or at 70-75% of current products and reduced over time
- Easy for industry and consumers to understand
- Easy to apply regionally

### ❑ Cons

- If at or below the limit, no motivation to move lower
- If high salt products don't have high sales, will have limited health benefits or impact; conversely – high impact



# Advantages and disadvantages of different types of Targets - Percentages

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## Setting Percentage reductions

### ❑ Pros

- May be easier for food industry to start
- Doesn't require as much information about the current levels
- Works better when combined with maxima limits

### ❑ Cons

- Need specific data before beginning and then afterwards if you want to know impact
- Doesn't recognize that some foods are harder or easier to make reductions

# Different types of Targets - Labelling



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## Labelling of foods - Low or high labelling

- Positive sticker/logo for foods that meet the limits (+)
- Warning symbols on foods that exceed the limit (-)

### ❑ Pros

- Requires setting maximal levels or to define “low” salt
- Simple to understand and useful to consumers

### ❑ Cons

- Must be mandatory – therefore needs regulations
- May need to reset maximal levels as levels decline (or no continual improvement); therefore hard to adjust as progress is made, or targets very challenging

# Food Categories, targets and timelines – Principles and Process



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## ❑ Food categories

- based on main food sources of sodium (high sodium levels or high amounts consumed)
- Usually a major source in 2 or more countries

## ❑ Maxima targets chosen

- most easily applied across the region
- based on food categories and targets set by governments in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile & US (Jan 2013, updated)
- Recognizes these were set after extensive consultation



# Engagement and next steps

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- ❑ Engage broader industry, consumer and health NGOs to sustain momentum
- ❑ Are voluntary
- ❑ Provide opportunities for companies and others to commit publically to process
- ❑ Meet regularly to continue to evaluate and adjust as appropriate
- ❑ Transparency and monitoring are important
- ❑ Process and targets will continue to evolve
- ❑ Governments will set further and more stringent targets over time



# Thank You !



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# Step 1 – Secure national commitment for salt reduction



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## ❑ The scientific context

- High level political commitments (UN General Assembly)
- WHO Guideline document (2012) – reviews the science
- IOM reports etc
- PAHO documents; TAG can help

## ❑ Prepare the national arguments, supported by epidemiologic data, as to the national importance of dietary salt reduction

- National health and economic benefits/costs, burden of disease stats etc



## Step 2 – Prepare data

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- ❑ Select the food categories and determine baseline salt content
- ❑ helps you determine the most important foods/food categories
- ❑ Also
  - foods that people eat and the amounts and frequency of consumption
  - salt content of the most commonly consumed foods
  - the amount of salt added at the table and in cooking
  - intake of high salt foods that are culturally or regionally specific within the country
- ❑ Draft targets and timelines as a basis of discussion



# Issues for discussion

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- ☐ Salt or part of wider initiatives
- ☐ Voluntary or regulatory approach
- ☐ Sales weighted vs. maxima (or both)
- ☐ Which foods to concentrate on – schedule?
- ☐ Presentation of salt content (per serving/per 100 g)

# What do you need to develop targets with industry



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- ❑ Which foods are the main contributors of salt in the food supply
- ❑ At what level?
- ❑ How
  - Food intake data – main foods consumed
  - Sodium levels
    - Food composition tables – generic (often based on USDA data etc)
    - Label data from the NFT
    - How accurate are NFT values?



# PLANNING MEETINGS TO SET TARGETS



# Planning Meetings to set targets

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- ❑ You have done your preparation work regarding
  - You have government/political support
  - Your overall plans re regulation/voluntary approach
  - Health and economic and other rationales
  - Some data for your country
  - Have identified priority (or potential) foods

# Step 3 – identify the key stakeholders



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- ❑ Effective dietary salt reduction at the population level requires a multi-sector approach including governments, the food industry, civil society and non-governmental organizations(NGOs)
  - Those working on behalf of government, should be free of COIs
- ❑ Outline principles of engagement
  - Targets should have impact
  - Terms for technical cooperation (transparency)
  - Agreed upon timelines





## Step 3 – identify the key stakeholders, cont'd

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- ❑ Select the appropriate stakeholder groups - industry
  - Reps of food categories – ideally food industry associations, rather than companies
  - All should be involved, may involve a blend of both associations, large companies and reps of smaller sectors/local manufacturers/importers
  - Take advantage of existing relationships
- ❑ Invite other ministries (health, education, agriculture, laboratories, industry ...)
- ❑ Engage NGOs



## Step 4 – Plan the meetings

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- ❑ Agree on a way of working, expectations
  - Clear purpose, agenda, opportunity to send questions ahead of time
  - Invite updates from industry of progress underway
  - Know your data before meetings
  - Foster open sharing of information
  - Keep notes, circulate afterwards
  - Separate individual meetings may be required for follow up
  - Request specific reformulation information/levels



# Step 5 – Monitor Progress

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- ❑ Industry accountability regarding targets and timelines in either voluntary or regulated contexts must be clarified in terms of a monitoring framework – best at start of process
- ❑ Propose and agree on monitoring framework
  - Process outcomes
  - Intermediate and longer term outcomes
- ❑ Launch in such a way so as to gather public attention
- ❑ Use a variety of sources for monitoring



# Data sources

- ☐ Nutrient declaration panels on products
- ☐ Company provided data, websites
- ☐ Company data from other countries
- ☐ Other databases, neighbouring countries/region
- ☐ Direct laboratory testing

## Issues

- ☐ Completeness of food composition labelling  
(both in terms of products labelled and label inclusions)
- ☐ Reliability of declarations on labelled foods

# International Food Monitoring Group



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- ❑ Protocols for food sampling in store
- ❑ I Phone software to collect photos of foods
- ❑ Data entry into spreadsheets/database
- ❑ Categorization of foods
- ❑ Comparisons
  - In country
    - By food category
    - By manufacturer
    - Over time
  - Between countries