

***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  
28-29 October 2014, Brasilia, Brazil***

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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**

**Salt Reduction**

Reducing dietary salt is recommended by the recent United Nations Summit to prevent non-communicable diseases and the World Health Organization to improve population health. Lower dietary salt increases blood pressure among approximately 30% of the population and is a probable risk factor for stroke, heart disease and is also associated with kidney stones and osteoporosis.

Where measured, the salt consumption is more than 10g daily, maximum quantity recommended by WHO. Strongly obese people are particularly susceptible to the adverse blood pressure effects of excess salt. High levels of blood pressure is a major risk factor in at least 40% of all heart disease and stroke which represent 45% of all deaths from coronary artery disease in the Americas where between 20-30% of the adult population has elevated blood pressure.

Last updated on 09/06/2013, 10:00 AM, 2013-06-09

**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...

**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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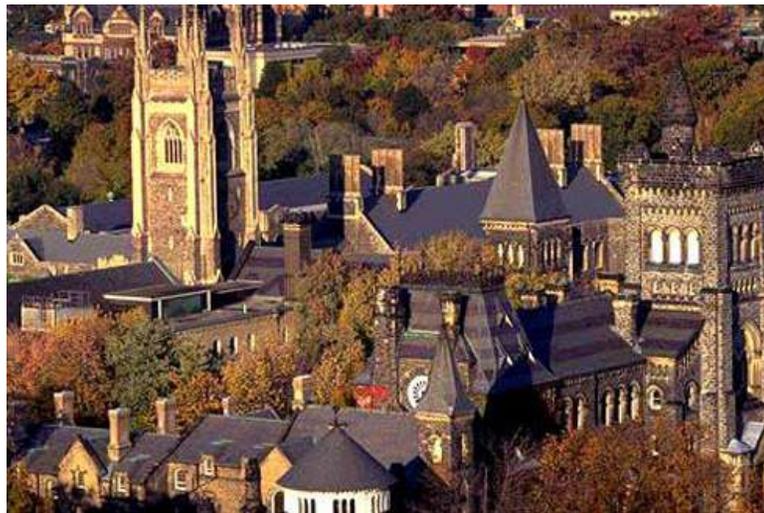
- ❑ Engage broader industry, consumer and health NGOs to sustain momentum
- ❑ Are voluntary
- ❑ Provide opportunities for companies and others to commit publically to process
- ❑ Meet regularly to continue to evaluate and adjust as appropriate
- ❑ Transparency and monitoring are important
- ❑ Process 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