

# DROP THE SALT!

## Campaign Bulletin

Issue 8 | September 2010

Welcome to the AWASH quarterly bulletin which provides an update on significant developments on salt issues in Australia and around the world since April this year. AWASH is hosted by The George Institute which recently changed its name to The George Institute for Global Health. Please visit our new website at <http://www.georgeinstitute.org> to find out more about us.

We were all very saddened by the news of the death of Dr Trevor Beard who has played a pivotal role in salt reduction in Australia including as one of the founding members of AWASH. Trevor made it his personal mission to try and diminish the burden of hypertension by reducing salt intakes. His book – SaltMatters – helped to rid many patients of Meniere's disease by getting them to follow the Salt Skip diet and he was elected as Senior Australian of the Year 2006 for Tasmania as a result of this. He will be greatly missed by all of us but the many contributions he has made to public health will continue to reap benefits.



### Shaking news

#### Assault on salt in processed meats

In May this year, in response to the announcement that the government's Food and Health Dialogue would be considering targets for processed meat products, The George Institute issued a report showing that less than 10% of processed meat products were below the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) salt targets for similar products.

The research found that, out of a total of 552 processed meat products including bacon, sausages, deli-meats, meat burgers, meat pies and canned meat, 43% of bacon products, 30% of meat burgers and 14% of canned meats were already below FSA targets. Apart from salami and sausage rolls there were between 3 and 6% of products below the targets in each of the other processed meat sub-categories. This demonstrates that for most processed meat categories in Australia, the FSA targets are technically feasible. Whilst further consideration will need to be given to any potential technical considerations that might make it more difficult to reduce salt levels in sausage rolls and salami to FSA target levels, there seems a good argument for simply adopting the UK targets for other categories. AWASH will be writing to the Food and Health Dialogue to this effect.

**This campaign bulletin includes preliminary information on International Salt Awareness Week 2011, our latest research on salt levels in Australian processed meats, details of the proposed outcomes of a string of international meetings on salt reduction and plans for our international database collaboration.**

### Salt Awareness Week 2011 – Salt and Men

[World Action on Salt and Health \(WASH\)](#) has announced that the theme for International Salt Awareness Week, 7-13th February 2011, will be Salt and Men, aiming to raise awareness of the dangers of a high salt diet in young men. AWASH is currently seeking sponsorship to organise an event to coincide with International Salt Awareness Week. Further details will follow. Please [contact Jacqui](#) if you would like to discuss further.

This bulletin is published quarterly to update stakeholders and supporters on relevant issues. Further information can be found on the Drop the Salt! Campaign website at [www.awash.org.au](http://www.awash.org.au)

### AWASH Food Industry Strategy

AWASH now has commitments to salt reduction from 19 companies and is currently in the process of putting together company update reports. It is considering how it might broaden the food industry strategy to engage with more members of the Quick Service Restaurant sector as well as supporting smaller businesses to develop salt reduction plans. AWASH is collating the 2010 data on sodium levels from the processed food database and will be asking companies for updated information on sodium levels. See the [food industry page](#) on the AWASH website for further information on industry salt reduction activities.

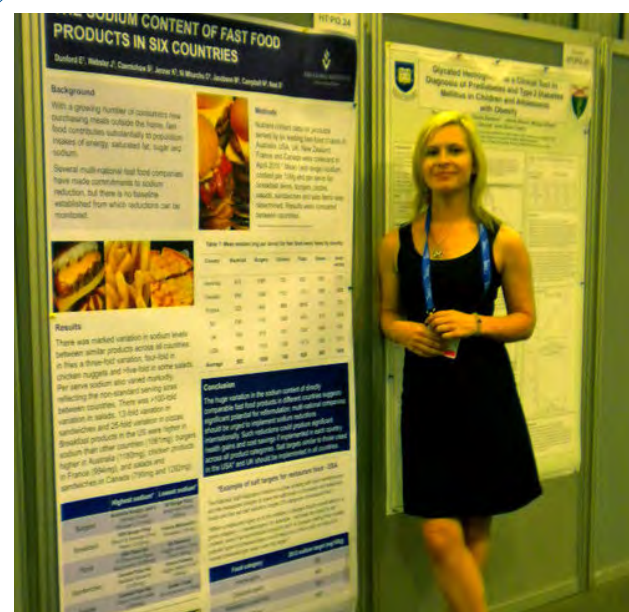
### Government engagement

#### Australian Health Survey and monitoring sodium intakes

The George Institute has funding to conduct 24hr urinary analysis on a small sample of the Australian population as part of its National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership Grant. AWASH wrote to the former Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Aging, Mark Butler, proposing collaboration with the Australian Health Survey but received a response saying this would not be possible. The Department of Health and Aging has confirmed that it will only be collecting spot urines as part of its survey. AWASH is currently holding discussions with the Victorian Health Department and NSW Health about the potential for boosting samples in each state to ensure that there will be accurate estimations for each state. [Contact Jacqui](#) for further information

#### Food and Health Dialogue and salt targets

The Food and Health Dialogue announced targets for bread and breakfast cereals in March and said it would be considering the potential for reformulation of processed meats and simmer sauces next, with meetings planned for next month. AWASH is concerned at the slow rate of progress of The Dialogue and the fact that the targets so far established for bread and breakfast cereals are less stringent than similar targets in the UK and USA. AWASH will be writing to the Dialogue with proposals to expedite the target setting process and to urge that targets are established at levels that are technically feasible at the same time as being challenging enough to have an impact on population salt intakes.



### International Meetings

Lizzy Dunford has just returned to Sydney after an 8 week working trip to Europe and South Africa. The objectives of the trip were to consolidate work initiated with Hopital Avicenne Paris on salt intake and obesity, present a poster at the ICO in Stockholm and further discussions with a number of key international collaborators about the establishment of a global food monitoring system. This trip resulted in new collaborations in our global food database project, as well as further strengthening existing relationships with key collaborators in our work on salt reduction. There was a large amount of interest from all collaborators to monitor the food industry's reformulation efforts on a global scale.

The trip was funded by a Sydney Medical School Travelling Fellowship and The George Institute, with additional support from hosting organisations such as Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming in London, The University of Oslo and Hopital Avicenne Paris. The George Institute would like to all of the following organisations for their collaboration during Lizzy's trip:

- Consumer Goods Council – South Africa
- French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA) – France
- Hopital Avicenne, University of Paris - France
- Kellogg's – South Africa
- Medical Research Council – UK
- Medical Research Council – South Africa
- Norwegian Directorate of Health – Norway
- Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming - UK
- The University of Auckland – New Zealand
- The University of Oslo – Norway
- World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) – UK

## Conferences and Events

### ➤ Dietitians Association of Australia's 28th National Conference, Melbourne, May 2010

Lizzy Dunford presented on "The sodium content of Australian processed and fast food products" at the DAA's National Conference in May this year.

### ➤ Reducing Obesity in our Communities, Sydney, July 2010

Bruce Neal gave a talk titled "Monitoring the nutrition content in the food supply" at a Symposium convened by ILSI SEAR Australasia and CHIP in Sydney in July.

### ➤ International Congress on Obesity, Stockholm, July 2010

Lizzy Dunford presented a poster on "The sodium content of fast food products in six countries" at the International Congress on Obesity in Stockholm in July.

## International Database Collaboration

AWASH has been meeting with stakeholders in the UK, USA, France, Canada, Norway, China, Singapore, India, Fiji, The Philippines, South Africa and New Zealand to discuss collaboration on a global branded food database project. The overall goal of the collaboration is to bring together readily available data about the composition of fast foods and processed foods globally that can be used to drive national and international improvements in the food supply. Please [contact Lizzy Dunford](#) if you would like to be involved in this project.

## Regional meetings and salt networks

A range of regional salt reduction meetings have been taking place in Europe, the Asia Pacific and the Americas and networks are developing to support the implementation and exchange of learning between national initiatives. This includes the EU Salt Action Network, the Pan American Health Organisation expert group and consideration of networks for the Western Pacific Region.

### ➤ WHO Western Pacific Regional Meeting on Salt Reduction – Singapore, June 2010

A WHO technical consultation meeting on approaches to salt reduction in the Western Pacific Region was hosted by the Singapore Health Board in Singapore from 1-3 June. A report will be circulated shortly.

### ➤ Creating an Enabling Environment for Salt Reduction – World Health Organisation/ UK Food Standards Agency, London, UK July 2010

Jacqui Webster was invited to present on progress of the AWASH Drop the Salt! campaign at this meeting in London. The meeting set out to exchange information about best practice in relation to initiatives to reduce salt intakes. A further meeting is being planned for Calgary in October 2010 to discuss monitoring of sodium intakes and sources of salt in the diet. The intention is to

ultimately develop a World Health Organisation framework for stakeholders to support the development of effective population-based salt reduction strategies. For further information see: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/reducingsalt/en/index.html>

## Getting Serious About Salt in the Pacific

The George Institute has been working with the World Health Organisation South Pacific Regional Office to support the development of salt reduction strategies in the Pacific Islands. The Fiji Health Minister recently announced the establishment of a number of Salt Action Challenge Groups in Fiji and has also requested that all hospitals reduce levels of salt and sugar in foods purchased by one third. Salt reduction initiatives are also being planned in a number of other countries including Guam, The Solomon Islands, Nauru and The Cook Islands. For more information [contact Jacqui](#).

## International Developments

There has been a raft of new international developments including:

- Project Heart Safe in New Zealand: <http://www.heartfoundation.org.nz/index.asp?pageID=2145881546>
- The Canadian Sodium Working Group recommendations for a national salt reduction strategy: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/sodium/strateg/index-eng.php>
- US Institute of Medicine report on strategies to reduce sodium intake: <http://www.iom.edu/Activities/Nutrition/ReduceSodiumStrat.aspx>
- UK Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH) research on barbeque foods and salads: [http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/media/recent\\_press\\_releases.htm](http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/media/recent_press_releases.htm)

## Become an AWASH Supporter

Don't forget that the success of the Drop the Salt! campaign depends on widespread support from all stakeholders including consumers, industry, government and other interested groups. If you support AWASH's mission and goals, why not sign on to become a supporter? Becoming an AWASH supporter is free. For more information, or to sign up as a supporter, visit: <http://www.awash.org.au/about/supporters.html>.

Please feel free to send this newsletter on to friends or colleagues that you think would be interested in becoming a supporter of AWASH.

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@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au).

