

# DROP THE SALT!

## Campaign Bulletin

Issue 11 | September 2011

### UN Summit Outcomes

#### Not appropriate response to NCD crisis

Advocates for salt reduction are not happy with the outcomes of the UN High-Level NCD Meeting on NCDs which took place in New York 19-20th September. The George Institute's Jacqui Webster, writing for The Conversation, said: "While the Health Minister's commitment to \$4 million funding to the WHO to implement its action plan to prevent NCDs made at the [UN High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases](#) last week is welcome, the sums of money pledged pale into insignificance compared to the tens of billions that were raised to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria at a similar summit a decade ago. Leaders talk of an NCD crisis but an appropriate response at global level has yet to be seen" Jacqui was much more positive about the \$25 million allocated to Pacific Island countries.

Read the full article at The Conversation at <http://theconversation.edu.au/action-on-salt-will-mean-longer-healthier-lives-3443>.

#### Failure to set life saving targets for salt reduction

The failure of the Summit to set life-saving targets for salt reduction was also highlighted by World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) in a recent media release. It stated that:

- Salt reduction targets were not adopted, despite being identified as the most cost effective measure to reduce NCDs for both developed and developing countries
- Countries urged to take matters in to their own hands: set a target of 5g salt per day by 2025

Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of WASH said:

"It is very disappointing that the Political Declaration, signed by the United Nations member states, falls

short of setting goals or targets. It is particularly frustrating when setting a simple target, such as reducing salt intakes to less than 5g per day by 2025 would save millions of lives. This is in spite of a clear statement by the Director General of the WHO, Margaret Chan, who acknowledged salt reduction as 'one of the most cost effective, feasible mechanisms to reduce NCDs'.

For more information go to [www.worldactiononsalt.com](http://www.worldactiononsalt.com)

### Scaling up action on salt in the Pacific Islands

Action on salt has gained new momentum in the Pacific Islands following a presentation on cost effectiveness of salt reduction strategies to Ministers at the Pacific Island Food Summit in Vanuatu in April last year. The South Pacific Office of the World Health Organisation has since funded workshops in Fiji in June, Tonga in August and Guam in September to discuss the benefits of salt reduction.

Following on from this The George Institute has been working collaboratively with the World Health Organisation to facilitate the development of salt reduction activities as part of non-communicable disease strategies in Fiji, Nauru and the Solomon Islands. A range of activities, including restricting purchases of salt in schools and hospitals, setting up food composition databases,

and using markets to educate people about low salt cooking are now being implemented as well as establishing standards for salt levels in foods. More work to establish programs in other Pacific countries and to develop a salt strategy tool kit has commenced. For more information contact Jacqui on [jwebster@george.org.au](mailto:jwebster@george.org.au).



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)

## The George Institute China

In China, salt reduction is a primary theme for the next two years in the 'Government-led National Initiative of Healthy Lifestyle for All' program, which is a government initiated program being implemented through China Centre for Disease Control network country wide. This program started in 2007 with the aim of promoting healthy lifestyles among the Chinese population. The relevant health promotion activities are implemented in most of the provinces in China.

Shandong Province remains the most outstanding province having a coordinated salt reduction program in place with the support from the provincial government. Beijing has been doing a great job as well with strong support from the vice mayor Mr Ding Xiangyang. Low sodium salt is available for purchase in almost 100% of supermarkets in Beijing now with some supermarkets having removed all usual salt from their shelves.

The China Action on Salt Reduction Network (the idea is similar to the China Salt Reduction Initiative) was launched early this month with the secretariat being based at ThinkTank and Beijing Hypertension League. Currently there are over 30 individuals each representing a stakeholder institution included in this network. Dr Wu is a member of this network representing The George Institute, China. There are representatives from MOH, China CDC, Salt Industry, Food Industry, and Military Health System included in this network.

The George Institute China is also co-ordinating a community intervention as part of the China Rural Health Initiative with salt reduction interventions, including the use of a subsidised salt substitute now underway in 60 communities as part of a controlled study.

For more information contact Nicole Li [nli@thegeorgeinstitute.org.cn](mailto:nli@thegeorgeinstitute.org.cn).

## Pilot Project on Salt Reduction in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

In June this year, Jacqui Webster was invited by the Mongolian Health Minister to assist in the development of a pilot salt reduction intervention in the capital city of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. Supported by the World Health Organisation Western Pacific Regional Office, Jacqui spent 10 days working closely with the technical working group consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, food industry organisations and consumer organisations to facilitate a consultation on salt reduction and provide training on monitoring and evaluation. Mongolia is currently in the final stages of planning to monitor salt intakes and salt levels in foods prior to initiating the two year pilot intervention with plans to roll out to a national strategy once the pilot program is complete. For more information contact Jacqui at [jwebster@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:jwebster@georgeinstitute.org.au).

## TGI Soup Report

The government's Food and Health Dialogue (FHD) was set up in 2009 and has since established a reformulation working group and is in the process of setting a sodium target for packaged soup products. Both the value and the sales volume of soup products have been growing over the past five years, meaning that soup products have likely become greater contributors to salt intake in the Australian diet. The objective of this report was to examine changes in the sodium levels in Australian soup products from 2008-2011. Key findings were:

- ▶ The number of soup products increased due mostly to a rise in the number of chilled soup products
- ▶ Mean sodium levels did not show much change from 2008-2011
- ▶ The mean sodium level in dry soup mixes was higher than in chilled and canned soups
- ▶ Nestlé products had higher sodium levels than other leading manufacturers and Woolworths had lower levels
- ▶ The overall proportion of soups that met the UK FSA target of 290 mg/100 g increased from 40% in 2009 to 48% in 2011. 37% of dry soup mixes, 45% of canned soups and 71% of chilled soups met the target
- ▶ The National Heart Foundation Tick was only present on 10% of soup products, despite 27% being eligible to carry the Tick. Tick products contained less sodium per 100 g and had a larger serving size than products without the Tick
- ▶ 47% of soup products provided %DI labelling on the front of pack. These products contained less sodium and had a smaller serving size than products without %DI labels
- ▶ Only 1% of products made a reduced salt claim

Since 48% of Australian soup products met the UK FSA sodium reduction target of 290 mg/100 g, it suggests that this target is challenging yet feasible in the current Australian market and thus is recommended to the FHD as a maximum target for Australia.

Please contact Lizzy on [edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au) if you would like a copy of the full report



## British Columbia's Sodium Reduction Campaign

Have you seen British Columbia's new website with a focus on healthy eating and sodium reduction? Checkout [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca) – there is a contest, video clips of dietitians and links to their television ad "Sodium City".

## Welcome to our visiting students from Macquarie University and the University of Sydney

Seven students will join AWASH this August – November as they complete the practical component of their degrees in Health and Nutrition and Dietetics

All students will assist AWASH in collecting and collating data for the global branded food composition database and analysing data from the consumer knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards salt questionnaire used in Drop the Salt – Lithgow.

This collaboration is a great opportunity to help build practical skills and increase consumer awareness of upcoming graduates as well as providing AWASH with new ideas and insight into consumer behavior.

Welcome to all students, we hope you feel at home at AWASH!

## Drop the Salt! Lithgow

### Preliminary Analysis of 24hr Urine Samples

A random sample of Lithgow residents aged 20 or over years was obtained from the 2009 federal electoral roll. A 24 hr collection of urine was sought from each selected individual and sodium, potassium and creatinine were assayed.

Preliminary findings indicate the overall mean urinary sodium excretion as 147mmol/d which equates to 8.6g salt/day. The recommended salt intake for Australian adults is 6g/day.

Further analysis will be completed in the coming months to assess the 24hr diet recall and spot urine samples with findings to be announced locally by the end of the year and published in 2012. Discussions about potential interventions are underway and repeat monitoring will then be undertaken at the end of 2014. In Victoria, data collection is continuing, with a view to releasing preliminary findings early 2012.

## Food and Health Dialogue

The Australian Government's Food and Health Dialogue has just launched a new website at <http://www.foodhealthdialogue.gov.au/internet/foodandhealth/publishing.nsf>

The Dialogue is a joint government-industry-public health initiative aimed at addressing poor dietary habits and making healthier food choices easier and more accessible for all Australians. The website explains how under the Dialogue, Food Category Action Plans are developed following agreement on reformulation and, where appropriate, portion sizing and consumer messaging targets for each food category. The Plans provide industry endorsement of the targets and outline how industry will work towards achieving agreed targets. To date, Category Action Plans have been endorsed for the Bread, Ready-to-eat Breakfast Cereal, Simmer Sauce and Processed Meat

categories. The next categories to be addressed will include Soups, Processed Poultry, Cheese and Savoury Pies.

### Food Innovation Workshops

Food reformulation: Opportunities to make our food supply healthier

As part of the Food and Health Dialogue program of work the Department of Health and Ageing has engaged the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to conduct three one day workshops around Australia to provide an information sharing forum for industry, government and researchers involved in food innovation and product reformulation.

Food industry representatives and researchers are invited to attend these workshops to learn more about current food innovation technology and opportunities for product reformulation.

<http://www.foodhealthdialogue.gov.au/internet/foodandhealth/publishing.nsf>

### The Global Food Monitoring Group

Lizzy was invited to speak at the 9th International Food Data Conference in Norwich, UK this September where she presented on the work that has been done so far by the Food Monitoring Group. The Food Monitoring Group was established in October 2010 with the aim of comparing the nutritional composition of processed foods between countries, between food companies and over time through the establishment of a global branded food database. 22 countries are currently involved in the project, and a protocol document outlining the aims and methodology for the global branded food database will soon be published in the European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation.

## Partnerships for Community Health and Wellbeing: Prevention is Everyone's Business

"Partnerships for Community Health and Wellbeing: Prevention is Everyone's Business" is the theme for the next CHIP/ILSI Symposium being held December 7 – 8, 2011 at the University of Western Sydney, Clinical School, Blacktown Hospital, Sydney.

Hear updates on global and Australian evidence-based best practice for building successful community initiatives through innovative partnerships, food interventions, lifestyle and physical activity initiatives that promote and sustain healthy eating and active living in households, workplaces and schools.

Plenary topics and workshops highlight updates on: Prevention in State and National Health Reform; Experience in Building Sustainable Healthy Communities; Building a Health Workforce Committed to Prevention; Food and Health Initiatives and Perspectives on Healthy Communities: Healthy Workers, Healthy Children and Transformative Opportunities Making Prevention Everybody's Business in Practice.

The Symposium will showcase progress being made to stimulate new opportunities to advance community health and wellbeing.

For more information please visit the CHIP website <http://swahs.elcom.com.au/CHIP/CHIP-Homepage/default.aspx>.

Please also contact:

Annette James, Centre for Health Innovation and Partnership  
Annette.James@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au.

## 7pm Project Traffic Light Labeling

Kitty's eye on Food Labels – this video provides an entertaining view on the food label debate.



[http://7pmproject.com.au/video.htm?movieo\\_p=39696&movieo\\_m=123216](http://7pmproject.com.au/video.htm?movieo_p=39696&movieo_m=123216)

## Don't Spare the Salt eMJA

*How can implementing a population-wide salt-reduction program be so hard?*

Click here to view the editorial [http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195\\_03\\_010811/nea10674\\_fm.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195_03_010811/nea10674_fm.html)

This piece reinforces the reasons salt reduction presents such a great public health opportunity.

*Is legislation on salt content the best thing since sliced bread?*

Click here to see the article on changes in the sodium content of bread in Australia and New Zealand

[http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195\\_06\\_190911/dun10673\\_fm.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/195_06_190911/dun10673_fm.html)

## Available resources

AWASH has the following resources available for interested stakeholders. Please email Mary-Anne with your mailing address details at [maland@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:maland@georgeinstitute.org.au) if you would like free copies sent to you.

**WHAT IS AWASH?**  
World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) was established in 2005. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) is a growing network of professional and health organisations that recognise the important health benefits that can be achieved by reducing people's salt intakes.

**DROP THE SALT CAMPAIGN**  
The Drop the Salt! campaign is the first cohesive national salt reduction effort in Australia. The four year campaign unites organisations in a commitment to act to reduce salt intake in the Australian population. A key focus is working with the food industry to identify key areas for salt reduction and establishing a comprehensive system to monitor progress against agreed goals for salt levels in foods.

**GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

**THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND TARGETS**  
The success of the Drop the Salt! campaign depends on widespread support from consumers, industry, government and other interested groups. The aims and objectives of the campaign are already supported by many people and institutions. If you would like to know more about salt in food, AWASH, or how you can get involved with the Drop the Salt! campaign, please contact the:

**AWASH SECRETARY**  
The George Institute for Global Health  
Ph: +61 2 9593 2929  
Email: [edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au)  
Or visit our website at [www.awash.org.au](http://www.awash.org.au)

**WAYS TO PINCH THE SALT FROM YOUR DIET**

- ✓ Increase your consumption of fresh fruit and veg and reduce reliance on processed foods
- ✓ Look for low sodium (<120mg/100g), reduced salt or no added salt options when shopping and avoid high sodium (>500mg/100g) foods.
- ✓ Check the label of different brands and choose the one with the lowest sodium content
- ✓ Make healthy snacks convenient, e.g. have fresh fruit pre-chopped, keep soups to go/put on the fridge, and healthy home made meals in the freezer
- ✓ Limit take-aways and fast foods
- ✓ Don't add salt during cooking or at the table
- ✓ Use lemon juice, garlic, vinegar or herbs and spices as an alternative to salt when cooking; sea salt and rock salt should also be avoided
- ✓ Avoid stock cubes, soy sauce, mustard, pickles and mayonnaise. Instead flavour with herbs, spices, chili, garlic, pepper, vinegar, lemon or lime juice
- ✓ Avoid salty snacks or limit salty snacks to an occasional treat
- ✓ When dining out, ask for sauces and other condiments to be served on the side rather than on the meal
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask the staff about the salt content of meals and ask them not to salt the food!

**DANGER!**  
**WATCH OUT FOR SALT**  
**EAT LESS THAN 6 GRAMS PER DAY**

**DROP THE SALT!**  
[www.awash.org.au](http://www.awash.org.au)

**THE GEORGE INSTITUTE**  
for Global Health

**AWASH**  
Secretariat  
of World Action on Salt & Health

## Upcoming events

### NOVEMBER

- Jacqui Webster will be presenting at a workshop on salt reduction strategies for the general population being organized by the Swiss Institute of Preventative Medicine and Health in Lausanne 16-18th November
- Mary-Anne will be representing AWASH at the Public Health Association of Australia's 2nd Food Futures Annual Conference, Hobart, Australia 22-23 November 2011
- Mary-Anne will be representing AWASH at the Asia Pacific Hypertension Congress, Taipei Taiwan 25th November.

### Publications

The following academic publications involving the AWASH team have been published since April 2011:

- Dunford EK, Eyles H, Mhurchu CN, Webster JL and Neal BC. Changes in the sodium content of bread in Australia and New Zealand between 2007 and 2010: implications for policy. *Med J Aust* 2011; 195 (6): 346-349.
- Webster J, Dunford E, Hawkes C, Neal B. Salt reduction initiatives around the world. *J Hypertension*. 2011;29(6):1043-1050.
- Campbell NR, Neal BC, Macgregor GA, Interested in developing a national programme to reduce dietary salt? *J Hum Hypertens*. 2011 Mar 31. [Epub ahead of print]

## 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](http://www.awash.org.au/about_supporters.html).

Please send this newsletter on to any friends or colleagues who would be interested in becoming a supporter of AWASH.

For more information please contact Mary-Anne Land, AWASH [maland@georgeinstitute.org](mailto:maland@georgeinstitute.org) or +61 2 9993 4547