

# Unilever's Position on Salt



Unilever

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### Key messages

- Elevated sodium intake has been associated with a number of non-communicable diseases including hypertension, cardiovascular disease and stroke.
- Global salt intake, averaging 9 to 12 g/day per person, far exceeds the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended maximum salt intake per day. Reducing salt intake has been identified by WHO as one of the most cost-effective measures to improve population's health outcome.
- We support the WHO's recommendation of a reduction to <2 g/day sodium (5 g/day salt).
- Salt plays a key role in food products for its seasoning properties and for technical reasons.
- Unilever has taken actions since 2003 to significantly reduce salt in its products, and we are committed to reducing salt in our portfolio even further.

### Unilever's Position on Salt

Salt plays a key role in food products for enhancing flavour, texture and stability. It also aids processing and has been used as a preservative to prevent microbial growth for thousands of years.

We support WHO's recommendation<sup>1</sup> of a reduction to <2 g/day sodium (5 g/day salt). As a Food and Beverage manufacturer, we have the responsibility to offer products that fit into a healthy diet and consequently have the duty to reduce the amount of salt across our portfolio.

Consumer acceptance is a key success factor in any salt reduction strategy. Consumers will not give up taste for health; hence, it requires a stepwise salt reduction over the years. Great-tasting products with lower salt levels will have the most impact in combination with education. An increase in people's own salt awareness and behaviour is also needed to prevent them from adding salt back themselves.

We support collaborative programmes on salt reduction initiated by governments, other stakeholders as well as by industries. They can be voluntary or mandatory in nature, ideally meeting certain conditions, such as:

- Collaborative approach with industry involvement to set realistic criteria and timings
- Realistic targets based on sound scientific evidence and consensus, in line with WHO recommendations on maximum salt intake, to have a clear impact on public health
- Creating a level playing field among all food industry players
- Taking into account technological limitations and the need to maintain consumers' product acceptance, e.g., role of salt in the product, contribution of the product in the diet and standards of identity
- Lifting potential regulatory hurdles (e.g., the use of potassium salt as a salt replacer)
- Supported by consumer awareness/education campaigns developed and led by government agencies or NGOs
- External monitoring systems put in place to track progress on targets and public health impact, led by government or independent agencies, preferably with a limited reporting burden to participants, e.g., by using already existing data systems

## Our Actions

We want to work together with governments, NGOs and all food chain stakeholders to find the best solutions for a positive impact on public health, including salt reduction. This could be via collaborative programmes, provided they meet the conditions mentioned above.

We have taken actions since 2003 to offer consumers products with less salt. The first milestone was to reduce salt levels to meet the WHO guidance of 6g per day by the end of 2010, this required reductions of up to 25%. In 2010, the next ambition was to reduce salt further by 15-20% on average to meet the target of 5g salt per day. Between 2010 and 2020, Unilever has taken out 37 million tons of salt from its food portfolio.

We continue to progress on this journey i.e., reducing salt in our portfolio through our nutrition goals and products specific standards. We also limit salt in the recipes developed with our products.

<sup>1</sup> Guideline: Sodium intake for adults and children. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2012.