

EFSA's first conclusions on EU-wide dietary guidelines confirm and support EuSalt's position

Brussels, 26 August 2008 - EuSalt, the association of European salt producers, considers EFSA's first conclusion that it is impossible to develop dietary guidelines that are valid across all EU-countries as a confirmation of its own position. EuSalt repeats that generalisation of salt requirements is impossible because of the differences between various population groups. Salt reduction is furthermore not the way to go, and might be dangerous for certain categories of people.

EuSalt considers EFSA's conclusions on the impossibility of developing EU-wide dietary guidelines as evidence for its long-standing position, namely that it is not feasible to generalise, neither globally nor on European level, requirements on the intake of salt. Developing generalized guidelines is not possible because of the wide disparities of specific population groups or individual needs. EuSalt further warns for the instalment of a global or EU-wide restriction in salt use without taking into account specific individual needs, dietary habits, or lifestyles. Wouter Lox, Managing Director of EuSalt, clarifies: *'Pursuing these general salt restriction policies might even be dangerous for many.'*

Because of its finding that EU-wide dietary guidelines are impossible, EFSA decided to concentrate on the scientific process to underlie the development of country-specific guidelines. EuSalt supports this recommendation because recent scientific publications have clearly warned and questioned the impact of salt reduction. These new publications should be further analysed in the development of guidelines so that these can be tailored to specific population needs. The scientific process should therefore include a timely reassessment following new scientific developments.

Recommended intake of salt per day

EuSalt is not in favour of a fixed recommended daily amount of salt intake. The needed daily intake of salt is determined by factors as geography, lifestyle and individual needs. Wouter Lox explains: *'Salt is a vital ingredient to deliver the nutrient Sodium to the human body. Sodium and Chloride play a crucial role in a number of life-sustaining processes, such as nutrient absorption and transport, and maintenance of blood volume and blood pressure. The body regulates its needs in sodium itself. This need is very individual and depends on individual,*

regional and lifestyle factors. Some specific population groups like elderly people, pregnant women or people with intense physical activities like athletes are in a need of a much higher intake of salt than others'.

Salt Reduction & Reformulation

The same applies for the EU policy to set salt reduction as a number 1 priority on the political agenda.

Because of the cultural and individual differences within the EU, EuSalt believes that it is not possible to impose an EU-wide policy on salt reduction without looking at the various differences between member states and between different population groups. Science has even warned for the dangers of such a policy without clearly considering the need for salt.

EuSalt regrets this policy and calls, following the non-conclusive findings in science, to be precautionary in developing health policies without looking to long-term health effects of reducing the salt intake or without re-assessing the terms in view of recent scientific publications. Lox specifies: *'Having such a fierce negative information on salt considering its vital role, or without looking first at the scientific grounds questioning an eventual reduction, or without looking at the health consequences a drastic reduction of salt intake might bring, brings the wrong message to the consumers. Because of the complexity of the diet and the different roles nutrients play in maintaining a healthy body, the policy should be dedicated to the importance of a healthy well-balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle with a focus on physical activity. In adopting a healthy lifestyle, a responsible use of salt plays a vital role.'*

EuSalt therefore welcomes and supports EFSA's first conclusions and underlines its willingness to contribute to the discussion in the next steps of the country-specific development of dietary guidelines.

About EuSalt

The non-profit Brussels-based organisation EuSalt is the association of European salt producers and represents the interests of 20 salt producers located all over Europe. Being the voice of the salt industry in Europe, EuSalt provides authoritative information about salt and its many uses to all stakeholders involved in the European policy-making, the general public and other interested parties. EuSalt also offers access to a pool of expert knowledge to authorities.

The association was founded in Paris in 1957 as the European Committee for the Study of Salt (ECSS) and was later re-baptised into the European Salt Producers' Association (ESPA). In the beginning of 2004, the association moved to Brussels and was renamed EuSalt. The association is now managed by Wouter Lox. The president of EuSalt is Jürg Lieberherr (CEO, United Swiss Salt Works).

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