

Salt reduction

Background

Work on salt reduction in key foods has been ongoing in industry since 2004, after a report from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) was published in 2003 stating that recommended population average salt intakes should be reduced to 6g per day to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and hence cardiovascular disease (CVD)¹. Salt intakes in adults is estimated to be 40% higher than the government recommended maximum of 6g per day².

In the latter part of 2020, Public Health England (PHE) issued the government's fifth set of voluntary salt reduction targets for industry to achieve by 2024. These targets are based around the 2017 targets with revisions made where it is believed that there is further scope for reducing salt.

What is Bidfood doing?

At Bidfood, we recognise that achieving the public health goal of consuming no more than 6g of salt per person per day will necessitate further action across the whole industry, government, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and individuals. As a result Bidfood will strive to achieve the new salt reduction targets by 2024 across the own brand portfolio.

Policy

Scope of PHE salt reduction 2024 targets

The eating out, takeaway and delivery sector is expected to make effort to procure products that meet the relevant table 1 targets¹. As a result, Bidfood will be focusing on achieving targets and reporting progress against table 1 information within the own brand range. This covers 84 categories that are suitably challenging and wide-ranging.

Own brand new product development

All new products introduced into own brand should meet, or fall below, the 2024 maximum targets for the relevant category. For the categories which do not have a maximum target, new products should use the processing average (average p) figure as the maximum. For categories which have a maximum target and a range average (average r), it should be an aspirational target to ensure products meet, or are below, the average salt target for that category.

This policy has been incorporated into supplier engagement and can be found as part of the Sample Submission Form's own brand standards.

Change of supplier own brand development

Own brand products changing suppliers must meet the nutritional content, or be better than the existing line, this includes salt. The product also needs to meet the 2024 targets as described above for new products, if not already done so.

Bidfood's wider own brand nutrition strategy

As part of Bidfood's wider ambition to improve the nutritional content of products, own brand products, whether an NPD or an existing line should be reviewed against the nutrition screening tool. All own brand products should adhere to Bidfood's salt reduction policies and existing lines under review should ensure the nutritional content is met or is improved upon.

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Branded products

Bidfood collects product information regarding salt levels, as required by the Food Information for Consumers Regulation³. Customers can access this information through the Advice Centre.

Additionally, the 2024 salt target report and the Government Buying Standards SID report details branded and own brand products that meet the 2024 salt targets for these categories.

Sodium replacers

The Department of Health and Social Care's stance on potassium based salt replacers has changed. After a review was completed by SACN and COT (Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment) on potassium-based sodium replacers, it has been deemed that at a population level, the potential benefits of using potassium-based sodium replacers to help reduce sodium in foods outweigh the potential risks. The beneficial effects at an individual level are likely to be small in size but will impact a large proportion of the population.

It is PHE's preferred approach for businesses to gradually reduce the overall saltiness of their products allowing for people's palates to adjust to less salty foods. It is a business decision if and how they wish to use sodium replacers.

As a result, it is Bidfood's policy to continue to reduce the saltiness of own brand products without the use of potassium-based sodium replacers. However, Bidfood allows the use of sodium replacers for functional purposes, such as a raising agent, and not to substitute the taste profile of the product.

Procedures and responsibilities

Salt reduction reporting of own brand products will be published on a monthly basis, where salt and sodium averages of own brand products will be compared against the 2024 salt target for their applicable category.

Products must match current salt levels, or be lower, when there is a change in supplier for an own brand product and in new product development.

Potassium based salt replacers can only be used for functional purposes, for example assisting in the baking process.

References

1. Public Health England, Salt reduction targets for 2024, 2020. [Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/salt-reduction-targets-for-2024>]
2. National Diet and Nutrition Survey, Assessment of salt intake from urinary sodium in adults (aged 19 to 64 years) in England, 2018 to 2019 [Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876252/Report_England_Sodium_Survey_2018-to-2019_3.pdf]
3. UK Statutory Instruments, The Food Information Regulations 2014, No.1855 [Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/1855/contents/made>]

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Policy History

Date	Version	Changes From Previous Version
Sept 2020	1	Updated policy commitment to the 2024 PHE salt targets.
Nov 2022	1.1	Updated to new policy structure, including new version control numbering.