



ANNUAL REPORT



May 2018 – April 2019



Contents

- ABOUT CONSENSUS ACTION ON SALT, SUGAR & HEALTH 3**

- SUMMARY OF THE YEAR 2018/2019..... 5**

- GOVERNMENT LEVEL WORK..... 6**
 - Prevention is better than cure..... 6
 - 2017 Salt Reduction Targets 6
 - Childhood Obesity Plan: Chapter 2..... 7
 - Government Consultations..... 7
 - CASSH Policy Positions 7

- ACTION ON SALT 9**
 - Salt Product Surveys 9
 - Salt Awareness Week 2019 12
 - Media Coverage 12
 - Supporters 13
 - Panel Discussion & Reception 13
 - Salt Awareness Week 2020 15
 - Action on Salt Resources 15

- FOODSWITCH UK..... 16**

- WORLD ACTION ON SALT AND HEALTH 17**
 - WASH Membership 17
 - WASH Publications 18
 - Action on Salt China..... 19
 - World Salt Awareness Week 2019..... 20
 - Updates from around the world..... 21

- ACTION ON SUGAR..... 23**
 - Sugar Product Surveys 23
 - Sugar Awareness Week 2018 25
 - Media Coverage:..... 27
 - Twitter: 27
 - Sugar Awareness Week 2020 27

- CASSH ALLIANCES..... 28**
 - Manufacturers and retailers..... 28

About Consensus Action on Salt, Sugar & Health

Consensus Action on Salt, Sugar and Health (CASSH) is a group of specialists concerned with dietary salt and sugar consumption and its effects on health.

Action on Salt and its international arm World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) are successfully working to reach a consensus with the food industry and Governments over the harmful effects of a high salt diet and bring about a reduction in the amount of salt in processed, catered and restaurant food, as well as salt added to cooking and at the table.

Salt is the main factor causing high blood pressure, the consequence of which is strokes and heart attacks; these diseases are the biggest causes of death and disability in the UK. Salt is also linked to a number of other health conditions including stomach cancer, osteoporosis, kidney stones, kidney disease and obesity. Salt intakes fell in the UK from 9.5g in 2001 to 8.1g in 2011, a drop of 15%. This has been due to a multifaceted salt reduction programme involving both industry and government, leading to a gradual fall in the amount of salt added to every day foods, along with a public awareness campaign informing the public of the dangers of too much salt to their health. This steady and continuous decline in salt intakes is extremely encouraging, as studies suggest that this reduction in average daily salt intake, through the reduction it has on blood pressure, prevented approximately 20,000 strokes, heart attacks and heart failures, 8,500 of which were fatal in the UK every year. If everyone lowered their salt intake from the current daily average level of 8.1g to the target of 6g, another 17,000 lives would be saved each year. Nevertheless, many adults still eat up to twice the maximum amount of salt that is currently recommended. Variations of this coherent programme are now being rolled out worldwide, and we are seeing similar health benefits in other countries.

Following the model of salt reduction, Action on Sugar is working to reach a consensus with the food industry and Government over the harmful effects of a high sugar diet, and bring about a reduction in the amount of sugars in food and drink products.

AIMS

- I) The identification and relief of those who suffer from the effects of a high salt or sugar intake or whose health is more at risk from a high salt or sugar intake.
- II) To advance education by providing information and training on the effects of salt or sugar intake on health and to undertake and disseminate research into the effects of salt and sugar on health.
- III) To promote the benefits a reduction in salt and sugar intake would have and to increase the understanding, awareness and recognition of the effects of salt and sugar intake on health.

Action on Salt Members

Chairman	Professor GA MacGregor	Member	Professor PM Dodson
Trustee	Professor PS Sever	Member	Professor T Lang
Trustee	Professor MR Law	Member	Professor KT Khaw
Member	Professor Sir Nick Wald	Member	Professor FP Cappuccio
Member	Professor P Sleight	Member	Professor J Winkler
Member	Professor AG Shaper	Member	Dr F He
Member	Professor WPT James	Member	Dr W Sunman
Member	Professor G Beevers	Member	Mr M Kane (food technologist)
Member	Professor P Elliott	Member	Professor S Capewell
Member	Professor Sir Michael G Marmot	Member	Professor K McPherson
Member	Professor NP Poulter	Member	Dr J George
Member	Professor MEJ Lean	Member	Professor Christopher Millett

Action on Sugar Advisors

Chairman	Professor GA MacGregor	Advisor	Dr Y Freedhoff
Advisor	Professor A Rugg-Gunn	Advisor	Dr M Rayner
Advisor	Professor D Haslam	Advisor	Professor J Winkler
Advisor	Professor J Cuzick	Advisor	M Kane
Advisor	Professor J Wass	Advisor	N Rigby
Advisor	Professor P Sever	Advisor	T Fry
Advisor	Professor P James	Advisor	Professor P Whincup
Advisor	Professor S Capewell	Advisor	Professor RJ Johnson
Advisor	Professor Sir Nick Wald	Advisor	K Jenner
Advisor	Professor T Lang	Advisor	M Mwatsama
Advisor	Professor R Lustig	Advisor	Professor Christopher Millett

Staff

Katharine Jenner	Campaign Director, Action on Salt/WASH/Action on Sugar
Sonia Pombo	Campaign Manager, Action on Salt
Mhairi Brown	Nutritionist, Action on Salt and WASH
Zoe Davies	Assistant Nutritionist, Action on Salt
Dr. Kawther Hashem	Campaign Lead, Action on Sugar
Holly Gabriel	Nutrition Campaigner, Action on Sugar
David Clarke	Press Officer p/t

With thanks to all volunteers who worked May 2018 – April 2019, we are very grateful for your help.

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Summary of the Year

2018/2019

Welcome to our annual report for 2018/2019, combining our three campaigning arms; Action on Salt, World Action on Salt & Health (WASH) and Action on Sugar (AoS).

One year on from the 2017 salt targets and nothing has been done by Government to spur on further action from industry. Salt reduction was taken on by PHE in 2017 as part of their wider reformulation programme within the Childhood Obesity Plan, but any action taken on since then is not evident. This is a tragedy for public health. Up until recently the UK were world leaders in salt reduction. Now, many countries outrank us, with stronger targets and fiscal measures to encourage action within the food industry. Salt reduction is known globally as the single most effective strategy to improve public health and benefits everyone; young, old and the socially deprived. Reducing the population's salt intake by just 1g/day would prevent over 4,000 premature deaths and would save the NHS £288 million a year.

Conversations (public and private) with food companies, and responses from representative trade-bodies, have continued to use 'Brexit' as a get-out clause for making real progress in changing their recipes (blaming concern over future sourcing of ingredients), for not improving their labelling (labelling might change post-Brexit) and for not reducing portion sizes for fear that Brexit would be blamed for shrinkflation.

The recent political climate, with an emphasis on personal responsibility over public health, has

triggered unease from both Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England to progress with any of the strongly recommended measures from the Childhood Obesity Plan that might be seen as being 'nanny state' interventions. Thus several directly-relevant publications, which were supposed to be released and would have helped us inform our campaigning work, have been delayed.

Staff changes

We said goodbye to Sarah Alderton in June, and welcomed back both Katharine and Sonia, who returned from their respective maternity leave in November 2018 and February 2019.

We are delighted to welcome Nutritionist Zoe Davies, who has been managing our food and drink database, and providing support to both salt and sugar reduction campaigns.

Government Level Work

Prevention is better than cure

In November 2018 the government released their vision for putting prevention at the heart of the nation's health, with the goal to improve healthy life expectancy by at least 5 extra years, by 2035, and close the gap between the richest and poorest. The document sets out the government's vision for:

- stopping health problems from arising in the first place
- supporting people to manage their health problems when they do arise

We were pleased to see salt mentioned in the vision document, with a commitment to further work to reduce population salt intake. The document stated that Government supports the need of further action on salt in order to reduce risk of heart disease.

We strongly agree that prevention is key to lowering the burden of non-communicable diseases in the UK and worldwide. However, without addressing the environmental, societal and economic reasons that shape our choices, we do not feel that the way forward with prevention is passing responsibility to the public.

2017 Salt Reduction Targets

At the end of 2018, Public Health England published the long awaited [report](#) on food industry's progress towards meeting the 2017 salt targets, which includes targets for both retail and

out of home.

Whilst we [welcomed](#) the report, it demonstrated what was already known – not enough is being done by the food industry. Without strong leadership and rigorous monitoring, industry have been able to get away with little progress in what should be seen as a key public health priority.

Half of the top 15 contributors to salt intake have not met their average salt targets, including the UK's top three contributors to salt - bread and rolls, bacon and ready meals/meal centres. Bread and rolls provide the largest proportion of salt to our diet and while the majority of retailer bread and rolls meet the maximum target, almost 60% of bread sold out of the home does not.

Meat products have achieved little to no reduction in salt content, yet when their target was set in 2014 it was watered down, and many products already met the target. Three years on and shockingly, 43% of meat products have still not yet met the maximum target, and none have met the average targets. This target was easily achievable, especially given PHE's advice that potassium-based replacers could be used, but without PHE's guidance or monitoring of the food industry, there has been a distinct lack of progress.

A comprehensive programme of salt reduction targets needs to be reignited and if this report tells us anything, it is that the food industry cannot, and must not, be made solely responsible for lowering our salt intakes.

Childhood Obesity Plan: Chapter 2

In June 2018, the UK government released chapter two of their childhood obesity plan which contained a series of proposed measures related to sugar and consumers. Action on Sugar have responded to each and every one because they are relevant to our campaigning work and will aid progress towards our objectives if they become policy. These included the calorie labelling for food and drink served outside of the home, ending the sale of energy drinks to children, restricting promotions of food and drink that is high in fat, sugar and salt and further advertising restrictions for products high in fat, salt and sugar.

Government Consultations

In March 2018 a public consultation was held to review of the UK's Nutrient Profile Model (NPM), which was first developed in 2004/5. The NPM was initially created by the Food Standards Agency to assist Ofcom in identifying foods that would be subject to advertising restrictions during children's TV programming. The consultation sought views on the modifications made to the UK NPM 2004/5, specifically its alignment with current UK dietary recommendations, which have since changed when the NPM was first developed.

Responses to this publication are now published [online](#), but more than a year on, an official outcome has not yet been communicated by PHE or Ministers.

As part of the government's proposed plans in [Childhood Obesity: a plan for action, chapter 2](#),

the Department of Health and Social Care have been gathering views on how to reduce children's over-consumption of products that are high in fat, salt and sugar. This has been done through various consultations, of which Action on Salt and Action on Sugar have collectively responded to.

- Mandatory calorie labelling for food and drink served outside of the home (September 2018)
- Restricting promotions of food and drink that is high in fat, sugar and salt (January 2019)
- Further advertising restrictions for products high in fat, salt and sugar (March 2019)

We also responded to the [European Food Safety Authority's consultation](#) on their proposed dietary reference values for sodium and chloride.

CASSH Policy Positions

In May 2018, Action on Sugar and Action on Salt launched [a combined seven-point evidence-based plan](#) to prevent obesity, type 2 diabetes, raised blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and cancer in the UK – with an urgent call for the Prime Minister to include ALL crucial recommendations in Chapter Two of her long-awaited obesity strategy.

Summary of seven evidence-based actions:

1. Reduce calorie intake of HFSS foods by incremental reformulation of sugar and fat
2. Reduce salt intake by incremental reformulation to below 6g/day (adults), and less for children.
3. Escalate the Soft Drinks Industry Levy and introduce a confectionery levy

4. Ensure only healthy products (non HFSS) are marketed, promoted and advertised
5. Ensure all products sold and provided in the public sector, e.g. schools, hospitals, meet strict nutritional standards
6. Make uniform colour-coded labelling on front of pack mandatory on all products sold in retail and out-of-home, with stricter criteria for sugar
7. Ensure the food and drink industry increases fruit and vegetable content of products through reformulation, promotion and marketing.

In July 2018, Action on Salt sent their policy position on the [future of salt reduction in the UK](#) to Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care, outlining the following six evidence-based actions:

1. Measure and publicly report industry progress against the 2017 salt reduction targets
2. Set new, ambitious salt reduction targets for manufacturers and the out of home sector
3. Measure salt intake through 24-hour urinary sodium measurements every two years
4. Make front-of-pack colour coded labelling mandatory and implement warning labels on menus in the out of home sector
5. Ensure only healthy products are marketed, promoted and advertised
6. Develop and implement a public awareness campaign on salt

In October 2018, Action on Salt, World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) and Blood Pressure UK developed a joint position statement [on the use of potassium-based salt replacers](#) to reduce

population salt intake in the UK. All three organisations agree with the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition and the Committee on Toxicity, following their extensive review of the benefits and potential risks to population health of the use of potassium-based salt replacers, and recommend the use of 'potassium salt' as one way the food industry can reduce the sodium content of food products.

However, we also believe that further reformulation leading to a gradual reduction of salt content is technically feasible in the majority of foods and we are ultimately working towards reducing population taste preference for salt and salty foods.

Action on Salt

Salt Product Surveys

Action on Salt has carried out a number of surveys on the salt content of popular food products. The surveys have focused on foods that people may find surprisingly high in salt and perhaps do not even consider when thinking about their daily salt intake. Following each of these campaigns, the brands featured negatively were contacted and questioned on their plans for salt reduction. A summary of this activity is as follows (oldest to newest):

[NEW Survey Exposes the Salads That Pose a Serious Hidden Threat to Our Health \(June 2018\)](#)



In June we surveyed the healthy salad offering available in both retail and out of home, to assess whether salads really are as healthy as they should be. More than a third (36%) of the 213 restaurant, sandwich/coffee shop and fast food salads surveyed contained a shocking 2g of salt or more per salad. The worst offender contained 6.2g salt - more than an adult's entire DAILY recommended limit of salt in just one salad!

Although nutrition information was available at the majority of the restaurant and fast food chains

included in the survey (either on pack, on the shelf label or at the counter on request) only one chain (Costa) provided full colour-coded nutrition information. Without this information readily available at their disposal, consumers struggle to know which options contain the least amount of salt, making it impossible to make an informed decision. A comparison of salt levels from salads surveyed in 2014 also found that in some cases, salt content has increased on average, from 1.65g/serving to 1.86g/serving. This survey highlighted a distinct lack of commitment from the food industry to reduce salt, which needs addressing immediately by Government.

A spokesperson from Abokado said: "We always strive to give our customers a balanced range of breakfast and lunch options and have treated this matter with the greatest priority"

[Action on Salt Expose Excessive Amounts of Salt in 'Healthy' Processed Meat Alternatives \(October 2018\)](#)



In October we exposed the perceived 'health halo' of processed meat alternatives, including meat free burgers, sausages and mince, with many concealing high levels of salt. Shockingly, 28% of all products surveyed were higher than their maximum salt targets, which were supposed to have been met by 31st December 2017 – more

than one year on and companies were still failing to make progress. This clearly demonstrated how ineffective the voluntary salt targets are, due to a complete lack of monitoring and guidance.

A spokesperson for Quorn said: "Whilst they are higher in salt, as clearly marked on the pack, they are still low in saturated fat. We review all our product recipes on an ongoing basis to ensure we are achieving what our consumers want in terms of taste and health credentials."

Public Health England's head of nutrition science Louis Levy said salt consumption had fallen over the last decade "but there is still a long way to go, as some foods still contain too much salt. Government has been clear with the food industry on the importance of meeting the 2017 salt targets. Since taking over salt reduction, PHE has been collecting data on industry's progress and we'll report later this year as planned."

Children's Breakfast Cereals STILL Shockingly High in Sugar with Nearly Half of Products Receiving a Red Label (February 2019)



In February, Action on Salt and Action on Sugar reviewed the nutrition content of breakfast cereals with packaging that may appeal to children, revealing an alarming and unnecessary proportion of sugar and salt. Of the 77 products surveyed, 65 would received an amber level of salt, with some containing more salt per 100g than ready salted crisps. Following this survey, Action

on Sugar and Action on Salt have been calling for a ban on packaging that may appeal to children for unhealthy cereal products.

The survey was released as part of the first annual state of food report '[The Broken Plate](#)', by The Food Foundation.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England, said: "The Government set out its expectation that breakfast cereal manufacturers lower the amount of sugar in their products by 20% by 2020. We have already seen reductions in some products, but there is clearly more progress to be made."

Dr Giota Mitrou, Director of Research at World Cancer Research Fund: "The amount of sugar and lack of fibre in many breakfast cereals aimed at children is worrying. Cereals high in sugar should not be marketed for children. Governments have an incredibly important role to play in protecting children from overexposure to unhealthy foods by restricting the marketing aimed at them."

Children's Meals in the Casual Dining Sector are Getting Saltier (March 2019)



As part of Salt Awareness Week, we exposed the astonishingly high amounts of salt found in children's meals in the out of home sector. Some dishes were found to have almost as much salt as an adult's entire daily recommended limit (6g). Overall, nearly half of all dishes (41%) were HIGH

in salt, and failed to achieve Public Health England's 2017 target. These findings reveal dismal progress made by the sector, with a similar survey from 2015 demonstrating little to no progress. Following the survey, we called for urgent high salt warning labels on children's menu dishes with more than 1.8g of salt per serve.

A spokesperson for TGI Fridays said *"We strongly dispute the findings of the Action on Salt survey as independent nutritional analysis has shown our kids chicken burger meal to contain 1.5g of salt, not 5.3g as cited in the report. This is all the more disappointing as we have long supported Government's salt reduction programme since 2012 with a focus on children's meals. We will continue with our work on salt reduction across all our menus as well as other nutrients in support of the Government's ambition to tackle childhood obesity".*

Meals are purchased at random from a select number of restaurants, and independently analysed for salt content by Public Analysts, and is an accurate reflection of meals that children would have consumed that day.

Ask Italian and Zizzi restaurants said: *"We are also committed to tackling the growing trend towards*

childhood obesity, recognising the longer term impacts that high sugar and / or saturated fat diets can have. Sugar and salt content is clearly labelled on our nutritional & allergen information and we have recently signed up to Public Health England's childhood obesity initiative which sets out ambitious reductions for sugar, salt, saturated fat and calories in key foods through to 2020. To date, we have made significant progress with sugar reductions in both gelato and other key dishes on our dessert menu."

Wetherspoon spokesman Eddie Gershon said: *"Wetherspoon notes the findings of the report. Our pubs offer a range of nutritionally balanced and lower salt meals. We have several children's meals that fall within the 1.8g salt target. We have also been working with our suppliers to reformulate and reduce salt in recipes across the children's and adult menus. For example, the new children's spaghetti bolognese meal (launches 6 March) has 0.5g of salt and the children's tomato and mascarpone pasta has 0.6g of salt. In terms of the meals with higher salt content, we will review these. We would also point out that parents can make their choice of meals on behalf of their children"*

Salt Awareness Week 2019

Our twentieth annual National Salt Awareness Week was held on **Monday 4th – Sunday 10th March 2019** with a public call to ACTION! Many people now know that eating too much salt is bad for their health, but with 75% of the salt in our diet coming from salt added to food by the food industry, the public are at a loss as to how they can cut back on their salt intakes effectively.

The week called on the public to take control of their health and demand healthier food from the food industry. It is unacceptable that the next generation face a future of preventable health conditions. The time for action is now.

Many people think that eating too much salt is only a cause for concern in later years, however there is evidence that eating too much salt as a child can also affect blood pressure, increasing the risk of illness later in life. Habits learned early in childhood tend to carry through to our adult years, including dietary habits.

We made a strong call for high salt warning labels on children’s menus, plus ambitious salt reduction plans from the Secretary of State for Health Matt Hancock by Easter 2019. We issued a press release to launch the week based on our food survey on children’s food sold out of the home (under ‘surveys’).

Media Coverage

- 7 x National Newspapers
- 2 x TV Broadcast
- 5 x Radio
- 11 x Online, National & Regional articles
- 15 x Trade articles

Twitter

- 418,500 impressions

Facebook

- 633 engagements, 4,616 reach

Instagram

- 2,306 impressions

Website

- 4,848 website users



Supporters

This year we were fortunate enough to have support from the following UK charities:



And the support of the following companies:



Panel Discussion & Reception

During the week Action on Salt held a panel discussion at St Bartholomew's Hospital Great Hall. Barbara Crowther, Coordinator of the Children's Food Campaign was our panel moderator and we were fortunate to have a great line up of speakers, with varied backgrounds and expertise, who each gave their perspective on the importance of salt reduction.

In total there were 60 delegates representing a

wide range of organisations, including food and drink manufactures and retailers, food industry associations, caterers and food service providers, NGOs, Department of Health & Social Care and Public Health England, academics and health professionals.

Our panel guests were:

- Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist, Public Health England
- Jenny Rosborough, Head of Nutrition, Jamie Oliver Group
- Kay Shearing, Founder, The Children's Healthy Food Company
- Professor Graham MacGregor, Chair of Action on Salt



Salt Awareness Week 2020

With no published salt targets since 2017, it is clear that the importance for reducing salt has gotten lost. Public Health England's Progress Report on the 2017 salt targets shows a large disparity between retail and the out of home sector, which needs addressing urgently. The bigger the difference in salt content between these two sectors, the more challenging further progress becomes.

Following the Prevention Green Paper Consultation, and the strong mention of salt, we are hopeful that significant action will be made in 2020. We should optimise this opportunity and call for strong targets and focus on the out of home sector. With that in mind, we would like to propose that we focus on the out of home sector for Salt Awareness Week 2020.

Action on Salt Resources

We continue to educate the general public and health professionals on the importance of salt reduction through dedicated pages on our website and through our resources. Every year hospitals, GP surgeries, sports centres, pharmacies, schools, libraries, universities, councils, businesses, charities and other interested parties hold their own events to support Salt Awareness Week, and this year nearly 200 events took place around the country. A total of 28,500 leaflets and shopping guides, and 380 posters were ordered in anticipation of Salt Awareness Week.



FoodSwitch UK



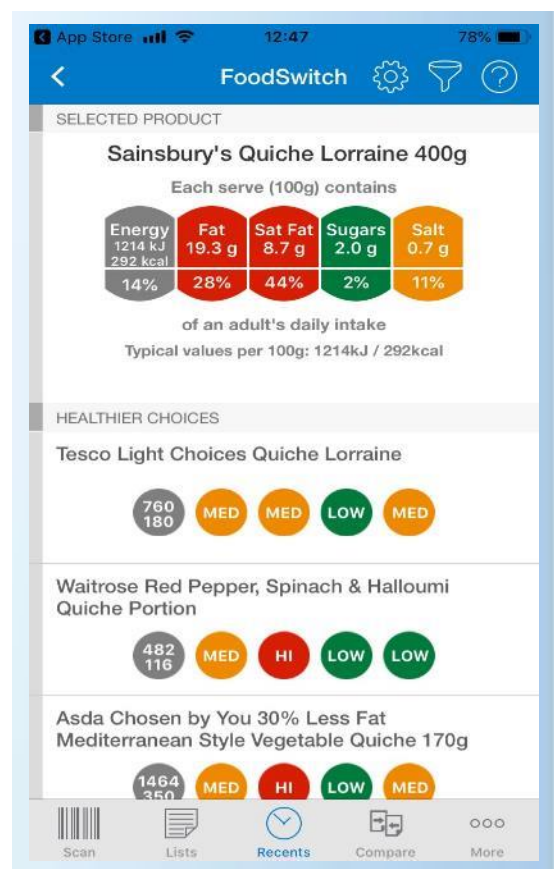
CASSH predominantly focused its campaigning priorities directly on the food industry and government, but our venture into smartphone apps has enabled us to take a more behavioural approach to salt and sugar reduction. The app educates and empowers users to pay attention to the salt, fat, saturates and total sugars content of foods, and encourages them to shop around and choose a healthier option. We are working hard to strengthen our FoodSwitch database by collecting data on a broad range of products from different outlets. This has enabled us to be reactive to media and to develop a more rounded picture of who is, and who isn't meeting the 2017 targets.

The app displays colour-coded nutrition information per serving as opposed to per 100g, aligning with what is stated on pack, and is thus more useful and relevant to the user. The in-built crowdsourcing function allows users to send in photos of products that aren't yet in the FoodSwitch database or products requiring an update due to reformulation, enabling us to keep a more up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive database and capture new product ranges as soon as they hit the shelves.

We produced a leaflet to support FoodSwitch which has been distributed for free to healthcare professionals, GP surgeries, hospitals, pharmacies,

NHS trusts, libraries and other organisations for Salt Awareness Week in both 2017 and 2018.

To download the current free version of the app, please visit [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#).



World Action on Salt and Health

World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) was established in October 2005 with the aim of bringing about a gradual reduction in salt intake throughout the world, by highlighting the importance of salt reduction and drawing attention to the need for countries to take immediate action. Our influence has grown to global policy levels, with the setting of a global target on salt reduction for all countries to achieve by 2025 to reduce the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes).

The mainstay of WASH's work remains to encourage and support key stakeholders around the world to set up their own salt reduction programmes, as well as acting as a global monitor, conducting surveys on food products – highlighting products high in salt with a view to drive reformulation by the food industry. WASH continues to raise awareness on the importance of a low salt diet during its annual World Salt Awareness Week, which is supported by many countries around the world, and via regular updates on the WASH website, social media (twitter and blog posts) and through media channels including radio and TV.

WASH also responds to international research on the link between salt and health. In August, a new paper in the Lancet, using data from the Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology (PURE) study, created controversy and confusion by

suggesting the sodium intake was only associated with cardiovascular disease and strokes in communities where mean intake was greater than 5g/day. WASH Chairman Graham MacGregor issued a response via the UK's Science Media Centre and published an editorial in the Journal of the Renin-Angiotensin-Aldosterone System, criticising the methodological issues with PURE data, including reverse causality and inaccurate measurement of salt intake.

In December, WASH sent out the first issue of their new quarterly newsletter for members, which included a roundup of global and national level salt, sugar and calorie reduction work. The second edition was issued in March 2019.

This marks the transition of a broader focus for WASH work and research into wider nutrition issues of concern.

WASH Membership

World Action on Salt and Health has more than 600 members from 100 countries. New members include experts from Malaysia, China, Ghana and Singapore.

WASH Publications

Role of salt intake in prevention of cardiovascular disease: controversies and challenges (June 2018)

Published in *Nature Reviews Cardiology*, our review discusses controversial studies with paradoxical findings relating to salt and health. While strong evidence indicates that salt reduction lowers blood pressure and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), some studies, including cohort studies, have suggested a J-shaped relationship between salt intake and CVD risk. However, these studies had severe methodological problems, such as reverse causality and measurement error due to assessment of salt intake by spot urine. Therefore, findings from such studies should not be used to derail vital public health policy.

He FJ, MacGregor GA. Role of salt intake in prevention of cardiovascular disease: controversies and challenges. *Nat Rev Cardiol*, 2018; 15 (6): 371-377.

Action on Salt China (July 2018)

Our comment in the *Lancet* introduces our NIHR-funded project Action on Salt China. Salt intake in China is high with average intake of 12–14g/day. More than 244 million Chinese adults had hypertension and another 435 million had pre-hypertension in 2012 and raised blood pressure contributed to about 2.33 million CVD deaths. Action on Salt China (ASC) has been set up to develop and implement an evidence-based, comprehensive, effective, and sustainable national salt reduction programme to help achieve WHO's recommended salt level in China. ASC is led by Queen Mary University of London, The George

Institute China, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC), National Health Education Center, and National Food Safety Risk Assessment Center, in partnership with provincial health and education authorities.

He FJ, Zhang P, Li Y, MacGregor GA. Action on Salt China, 2018; 392 (10141): 7-9.

Salt and cardiovascular disease in PURE: A large sample size cannot make up for erroneous estimations (November 2018)

In response to a publication in the *Lancet* using data from the Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology (PURE) study, which claims salt reduction should be confined to settings where its intake exceeds 12.7 g/day and that eating less than 11.1 g/day of salt could increase cardiovascular risk, we wrote an editorial in the *Journal of the Renin-Angiotensin-Aldosterone System*. PURE data has many issues such as erroneous estimations of salt intake from spot urine measurements and reverse causality. We set out the case that implausible results should not be used to refute the totality of evidence that demonstrates a reduction in salt intake benefits health.

Tan M, He FJ, MacGregor GA. Salt and cardiovascular disease in PURE: A large sample size cannot make up for erroneous estimations. *J Renin Angiotensin Aldosterone Syst*, 2018; 19 (4): 1470320318810015

Errors in estimating usual sodium intake by the Kawasaki formula alter its relationship with mortality: implications for public health (December 2018)

A study by Queen Mary University of London, University of Calgary, Harvard TH Chan School of

Public Health, US CDC and the Brigham and Women’s Hospital, published in the International Journal of Epidemiology, investigated the relationship between sodium intake and death based on various methods to assess sodium intake. The findings indicate that inaccurate measurement of sodium intake could be an

important contributor to the paradoxical J-shaped findings between sodium intake and cardiovascular events and deaths reported in some cohort studies.

He FJ, Campbell NRC, Ma Y, MacGregor GA, Cogswell ME, Cook NRC. Errors in estimating usual sodium intake by the Kawasaki formula alter its relationship with mortality – Implications for public health. *Int J Epidemiol*, 2018, 47 (6), 1784-1795.

Action on Salt China



Action on Salt China (ASC), funded by the National Institute for Health Research (16/136/77), aims to achieve a 15% reduction in population salt intake in China by 2021. ASC has developed a strategic plan encompassing four salt reduction approaches to address the key sources of salt in the Chinese diet. The four randomised controlled trials are:

- 1. Application-based intervention study (AIS)**, using a mobile app to deliver salt reduction messages to schoolchildren and families
- 2. Restaurant-based Intervention Study (RIS)**, targeting consumers, cooks and restaurant managers with low salt messages and tips
- 3. Housewife-based Intervention Study (HIS)**, facilitating family cooks to reduce salt when cooking
- 4. Comprehensive Intervention Study (CIS)** evaluating all interventions in real-world administrative areas.

The ASC website launched in September - <https://www.actionsaltchina.com/> - and will be the main outlet for ASC updates and information, through cooperation with WASH.

World Action on Salt and Health

World Salt Awareness Week 2019

World Action on Salt and Health held its 12th annual World Salt Awareness Week. The focus was on child health and salt levels present in children’s meals and products marketed specifically to children. WASH prepared a poster, which was distributed to all WASH members, placed on the WASH website and publicised via social media, and we processed translations upon request.



WASH worked with 13 countries to survey the salt content of children’s meals available at popular fast food chains, including McDonald’s, KFC, Subway and Burger King. Of the 343 meals included in the survey, 39% had more than 1.8g salt per portion. The saltiest dish available was in the Sultanate of Oman – KFC’s Popcorn Chicken meal with fries – with 5.95g of salt per meal. We found a huge variation in salt levels of the same

meal depending on the country it is sold in. For example, a McDonald’s Cheeseburger Happy Meal sold in Spain, with 3.6g of salt per portion, has three times as much salt as the same meal sold in South Africa (1.08g). This clearly demonstrates the success of South Africa’s mandated salt content targets.

More than 15 countries took part in World Salt Awareness Week, and as a result the campaign received coverage through print, social media, TV and radio around the world, with interviews on news programmes in Australia, media coverage of community events in Morocco and radio interviews in Costa Rica.



Updates from around the world

World Health Organisation

In October 2018, WHO Europe issued a report on marketing and advertising to children. The report found that many existing policies across Europe are insufficient, meaning that children are still exposed to the promotion of products high in salt, sugar and fat. Many policies focus on broadcast only, despite clear evidence that children are exposed to marketing through many communication channels. Furthermore, existing policies cover 'child-orientated programming', leaving a broad range of programmes that children may watch with their families. The report concludes that HFSS food marketing should be restricted to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.

USA and Canada

In June 2018, Philadelphia City Council voted unanimously to implement high salt warning labels on menus, if a dish contains more than 5g of salt. Philadelphia became the second city to take this step, joining New York City which passed the nation's first salt warning policy in 2015.

In March 2019, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) published updated intake recommendations for sodium and potassium. Adequate intakes for sodium remain at 1,500mg a day (equivalent 3.75g salt) and maximum intakes of 2,300mg a day (equivalent 5.75g salt) for adults, reconfirming calls to reduce population sodium

intakes to less than 2,300mg a day for adults, with a lower target for children.

Following the success of their voluntary salt reduction initiative, the National Salt Reduction Initiative - a partnership of organisations and health authorities across the US - has expanded to focus on sugar reduction. The NSSRI issued draft targets for consultation towards the end of 2018 and will work to encourage the food industry to reduce sugar levels in their products.

Reports in April 2019 suggested that national salt reduction guidance, currently in draft form with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), was in doubt as many food companies and trade organisations had been lobbying the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Companies were thought to have told the OMB that it would be too expensive to reformulate their products to meet the targets.

Latin America

Following the example of Chile, in June 2018, the Peruvian government issued a final Advertising Warnings Manual which requires warning labels to be displayed on both packaging and advertisements of foods with more than 2g salt per 100g/0.25g per 100ml, more than 22.5g sugar per 100g/6g sugar per 100ml, and more than 6g saturated fat per 100g/3g per 100ml.

Europe

As part of Portugal's National Health Plan, it was announced in July 2018 that the country was drafting a law to mandate salt levels in all bread produced or marketed in Portugal. The draft law states that by January 2019 salt content should not exceed 1.3g/100g, falling to 1.2g/100g by January 2020 and 1g/100g by January 2022. Bread and toast are the biggest contributors of salt in the Portuguese diet and in 2017 the country also announced a potential tax on salty snacks.

In November 2018, WHO Europe released a report of the results of their dietary salt intake survey in the Republic of Moldova. The report revealed that in rural areas of Moldova, salt intake is 11.3g per day while in urban areas it is 10g per day. Bread is the biggest contributor of salt in the diet, with an average salt content of 1.85g per 100g.

Australia and New Zealand

In July 2018, Australia's Healthy Food Partnership – involving Government, food industry bodies and public health groups – consulted on salt, sugar and saturated fat reduction targets. The consultation closed in November and the Reformulation Working Group is currently analysing responses. The targets will be finalised in two stages, with targets for food categories with a salt target only being announced first, followed by targets for saturated fat and sugar.

Gulf Region

In November, a regulation came into force in Abu Dhabi stating that healthcare facilities can no longer sell unhealthy products in their cafeterias, vending machines and restaurants. Items must meet the Abu Dhabi Department of Health's criteria to be sold. The criteria were issued in 2013 but until now have been voluntary.

In response to high rates of obesity in Saudi Arabia, in September the kingdom's Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) signed agreements with international food manufacturers to reduce levels of sugar, saturated and trans fat, and salt in products. Saudi Arabia are also aiming to introduce calorie labelling on menus in the out of home sector and to undertake a national health survey to determine rates of NCDs.

In January 2019, Qatar's Ministry of Public Health launched an initiative to reduce intakes of fat, sugar and salt in the country. As part of the initiative, the Ministry will hold workshops with experts to develop national policies.

Action on Sugar

Sugar Product Surveys

Action on Sugar continues to make sugar, calories and saturated fat reduction a priority for public health, to replicate the success of the salt reformulation programme.

We continue to impact all areas of the strategy, through holding key influential meetings with Public Health England, Department of Health & Social Care – whilst releasing product surveys to educate the public on sugar consumption and pressurising retailers, manufacturers and the hospitality industry to create healthier products.

Cross-sectional survey of the amount of sugar and energy in cakes and biscuits on sale in the UK for the evaluation of the sugar-reduction programme (July 2018)

A study published in the BMJ Open looked at the sugar and fat content of 381 cakes and 481 biscuits available in nine main UK supermarkets in 2016. We documented the wide variation of sugar and calorie content within the same category of cakes and biscuits. The shock findings highlight 97% of cakes and 74% of biscuits received a ‘red’ (high) label for sugar (>22.5 g/100g). Despite this, the study showed that reformulation can be achieved.

Hashem KM, He FJ, Alderton SA, et al. Cross-sectional survey of the amount of sugar and energy in cakes and biscuits on sale in the UK for the evaluation of the sugar-reduction programme. *BMJ Open* 2018;8:e019075. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-019075

Call For Ban On Excessively High Sugar And Calorie Milkshakes Sold In High Street Restaurants & Fast Food Chains (November 2018)



As part of Sugar Awareness Week 2018, we highlighted the alarming levels of sugar and calories hidden in milkshakes sold across high street restaurants and fast food chains. Toby Carvery served up the sweetest shake with its ‘Unicorn Freakshake’ containing an alarming 39 teaspoons of sugar – that’s over six times the recommended daily amount of sugar for a 7- to 10-year-old. All 140 products surveyed with nutrition labelling available online, would receive a ‘red’ (high) label for excessive levels of sugar per serving. As part of the survey we called for mandatory traffic light coloured nutrition labelling across all menus, along with a ban on the sale of milkshakes that exceed a calorie limit of 300 kcal per serving.

In May, we helped the Channel 4 programme Tricks of the Restaurant Trade to talk more about the survey. During the programme some of the restaurants released comments to state they were changing their recipes or delisting the products with the high sugar levels.

Dr Linda Greenwall and charity founder of the Dental Wellness Trust says, "These findings are remarkable, especially given tooth decay among children in Britain is now at a record high, largely because food and drink products are packed with unnecessary sugar."

Children’s Breakfast Cereals STILL Shockingly High in Sugar with Nearly Half of Products Receiving a Red Label (February 2019) – SAME AS SALT SECTION



In February, Action on Salt and Action on Sugar reviewed the nutrition content of breakfast cereals with packaging that may appeal to children, revealing an alarming and unnecessary proportion of sugar and salt. Of the 77 products surveyed, 65 would receive an amber level of salt, with some containing more salt per 100g than ready salted crisps. Following this survey, Action on Sugar and Action on Salt have been calling for a ban on packaging that may appeal to children for unhealthy cereal products.

The survey was released as part of the first annual state of food report ‘The Broken Plate’, by The Food Foundation.

Consumers misled on honey and so-called healthier syrups, despite them being officially categorised the same way as table sugar (May 2019)



We analysed a total of 223 honeys, sugars and syrups, all widely available in UK supermarkets, found that honey can be up to 86% free sugars (i.e.

any sugars added to food or drink derived from fruit juice, honeys or syrups) while maple syrup can be made of 88% free sugars.

This comes as experts are deeply concerned that consumers are still adding excessive amounts of honey and syrups to food and drink products believing them to be ‘healthy alternatives’ to table sugar,[2] not knowing there are almost as much sugars in them as in table sugar. Mandatory front of pack labelling, clearly outlining the sugars from free sugars and their contribution to our maximum sugar intake is vital. Action on Sugar found products sold in supermarkets boast the addition of honey in their product descriptions - often misleading consumers into thinking they are a healthier option - yet contain up to 25 times more table sugar or other syrups than honey!

Reformulation and Priorities for Reducing Energy Density; Results from a Cross-Sectional Survey on Fat Content in Pre-Packed Cakes and Biscuits Sold in British Supermarkets (May 2019)

Following the BMJ Open publication, the total fat and saturated fat content of cakes and biscuits was analysed. In both cakes and biscuits, total and saturated fat content was positively correlated with energy density. Our results show that cakes and biscuits sold in UK supermarkets are high in total and saturated fat, and that fat content contributes substantially to product energy density. Fat reformulation in these products would effectively reduce energy density, calorie intake and help prevent obesity.

Alessandrini, R.; He, F.J.; Hashem, K.M.; Tan, M.; MacGregor, G.A. Reformulation and Priorities for Reducing Energy Density; Results from a Cross-Sectional Survey on Fat Content in Pre-Packed Cakes and Biscuits Sold in British Supermarkets. *Nutrients* 2019, 11, 1216.


Sugar Awareness Week 2018

Following Government's release of their Childhood Obesity Plan: Chapter 2, there were a series of proposed measures which all went under consultation. For Sugar Awareness Week, we focused on the proposal of implementing calorie labelling in the out-of-home sector by highlighting the need for clearer labelling.

Eaten out of home tend to be higher in fat, salt and sugar, we also know that portion sizes are bigger leading to increased energy consumption. Eating out is no longer an occasional 'treat' with more than a quarter of adults and one-fifth of children are eating out at least once a week. Restaurants and cafes do not have to adhere to the same legislation around labelling that food manufacturers do and many do not display any ingredient or nutrition information at point of choice or elsewhere.

We surveyed the calorie and sugar content of milkshakes in the out-of-home sector and those sold in retail and over the week we raised awareness of our campaign through national media, an online campaign and local activities. Food companies and retailers were exposed and they, along with the government, were pressured into taking action.


We received a high level of twitter engagement during the week – from celebrities, NGOs, health charities and the general public. We gained support from leading health charities and organisations including SugarSmart UK, Cancer Research UK, Children's Food Campaign, NHS, Public Health England, Change4Life, Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution, Blood Pressure UK, British Dietetic Association, Dentists and dentist bodies and many more. We wrote blogs for Food Active and a feature for Tumble Tots Magazine, and were featured in the Healthy Food Guide, all of which were shared during Sugar Awareness Week.



Some freakshakes contain over 35 teaspoons of sugar.

That's nearly 6 times a child's daily limit. It's a scandal. We desperately need more legislation on nutrition labelling when eating out. Legislation with teeth.

SUGAR AWARENESS WEEK 12TH - 18TH NOVEMBER 2018
Join the conversation #sugarawarenessweek www.actiononsugar.org



During the week, we held a panel discussion and reception at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Great Hall discussing; *'What's the deal?'* hosted by Amanda Ursell and was well attended by the food and drink industry, NGOs and health care professionals, as well as members of parliament.

Our speakers each gave their perspective of sugar reduction who each gave their perspective on our discussion topic. Our panel guests were:

- **Tom Watson MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party** - What would a Government need to do to halt the rise in Type 2 diabetes within one 5 year Parliamentary term?
- **Priya Tew, Dietitian, BBCs 'Eat well for less'** - How important is reformulation and clear labelling in reducing obesity?
- **Cathy Port, Head of Category for Sweet and Impulse, Costa** - Are mandatory targets and measures preferable to voluntary, and what role can the food and drink industry play to support the public in consuming less sugar?
- **Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of Action on Sugar** - What effect does excess sugar and calorie intake have on our health and what is the impact on the NHS?



This year we chose to provide downloadable resources on our website. Many healthcare professionals and consumers contacted us in advance of the week to enquire and order our resource packs, demonstrating a high level of engagement.

We created a consumer facing poster to mark the week using resources by the Queen Mary design team. This was available to download along with our shopping guide.



The organisations below were 'official supporters' of Sugar Awareness Week 2018. Reinforcement from these organisations added weight to our policy calls and campaign actions – and helped to spread key Sugar Awareness Week messages even further, by offering supportive quotes and sharing information online. The quotes were shared on our website, social media and in our event delegate packs.



Media Coverage:

- 4 x National Newspapers articles in print, including piece by Tom Watson MP
- 4 x TV Broadcast
- 21 x Radio
- 33 x Online, National & Regional articles
- 13 x Online International articles
- 12 x Trade articles

Twitter:

- 134,000 impressions

Sugar Awareness Week 2020

Sugar Awareness Week 2020 will be held from 20th – 26th January 2020. The week aims to raise awareness of the impact of sugar on health to the general public. We will be holding a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons, hosted by our sponsor Andrew Selous MP.

There will be a panel discussion, focus will be on sugar and calorie reduction and clearer labelling, and specifically discussing current legislative loopholes that mean certain food and drink categories are not required to provide clear nutrition information to consumers.

CASSH Alliances

Action on Salt, Action on Sugar and WASH have continued to develop mutually beneficial alliances with other health charities and organisations. WASH has also continued to extend its networks in the international public health arena, participating at informal and formal WHO consultations, at both regional and local levels. Action on Salt, Action on Sugar and WASH have continued to work alongside other health charities, offering comments on health related media, acting as cosignatories on campaigning materials and attending numerous meetings, webinars and conferences around the world. WASH continues to support its international members with comments on press releases, logos on leaflets and posters and links through from our website.

Organisations Action on Salt, Action on Sugar and WASH have collaborated with in the last year include:

American Heart Association	Faculty of Public Health	Sustain—Real Bread Campaign
Blood Pressure UK	Heart UK	Sustain—Sugar Smart
British Dietetic Association	Kidney Research UK	Sustain – The Children’s Food Campaign
Cancer Research UK	Ménière's Society	Sustainable Restaurant Association
Center for Science in the Public Interest, USA	National Obesity Forum	The George Institute for Global Health
Consumers International	Obesity Health Alliance	The Food Foundation
CRONICAS Peru	Pan American Health Organisation	The NCD Alliance
Department of Health & Social Care	Polycystic Kidney Disease	The Stroke Association
Diabetes UK	Public Health England	Which?
Heart Research UK	Soil Association	World Health Organisation
European Salt Action Network	Sustain – Campaign for Better Hospital Food	World Cancer Research Fund
		The Food Foundation

Manufacturers and retailers

Action on Salt and Action on Sugar continue to meet with manufacturers and retailers to encourage, inform and monitor sugar and salt reduction. We have attended several meetings with retailers and brands, including out-of-home coffee shop and restaurant chains over the last year, such as dried fruit companies, Starbucks, Co-operative, ASDA, M&S, Mars and Peppercorn. We continue to meet with the Food and Drink Federation to assess commitment and encourage action.

Recently, sugar reduction and better labelling commitments have been announced by leading brands and retailers, including Nestle, Kellogg’s, Cereal Partners, Waitrose, Pizza Hut, TGI Fridays, Sainsbury’s, Asda, Aldi, Tesco, Costa, Greggs, Morrisons, some of whom have acknowledged Action on Sugar as key influencers in their decision making.

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