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MORE ACTION NEEDED TO CUT SALT CONTENT IN FOODS

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has thrown its support behind a new report that recommends targets for salt levels in common food products. The report reveals shockingly high levels of salt hidden in food products, contributing to premature strokes, heart and kidney disease.

“The George Institute for Global Health’s new report shows that while many companies have been reducing salt levels in their foods, and the government’s Food and Health Dialogue has set salt targets for bread and breakfast cereals and is moving on other products, a greater effort is needed to ensure salt intake is reduced much more quickly. PHAA supports the 85 new salt targets for foods outlined in the report,” said Michael Moore, PHAA Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

“There is already a huge body of evidence showing that salt is the main cause of high blood pressure, causing premature cardio vascular disease in thousands of Australians each year. Excess salt is also implicated in a range of other serious illnesses including stomach cancer, kidney disease, osteoporosis and asthma. The recommendations contained in the report will give industry a clearer understanding of the direction they need to take in order to help reduce salt in line with these targets and will provide evidence to support ongoing Food and Health Dialogue discussions.

“Reducing salt in processed and catered foods is the only effective way to reduce population salt intakes in Australia and clear targets for the food industry to work towards are a fundamental driver of this process. PHAA will be advocating that the Food and Health Dialogue supports these as interim targets for food companies to work towards, with a view to achieving them within the tightest possible timeframes.

“PHAA will also continue to advocate for front of pack multiple traffic light labelling (MTL) of food as a fundamental preventive health measure, as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing salt intake along with fat and sugar. Ordinary mums and dads ought not to be forced to plough through complex labelling when trying to make healthy decisions for their children. A traffic light for salt, another for fat and one for sugar would send a simple clear message to a consumer about factors that are the prime causes of chronic disease.

“Appropriate traffic light labelling is one important step in dealing with the growing epidemic of food-related illness. Of course there is no single solution, and we need to develop a range of responses to addressing food-related illness and disease. Reducing salt content and implementing traffic light labelling would be two large steps in the right direction,” concluded Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

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