



Meat Industry Fully Committed to Sodium Reduction

- Canadian Meat Council members not only recognize, but welcome the opportunity to join with other food processors, foodservice operators and consumers in the pursuit of lowered sodium intakes by Canadians.
- Significant, real and measureable progress has been made both in modifying previous formulations and in developing new prepared meat and poultry products that not only meet, but in many cases exceed, the reductions envisaged in the 2016 voluntary benchmarks for sodium reduction. The attached labels represent only a few examples of the growing array of sodium-reduced processed meat products designed to meet the Health Canada 2016 guidelines and that are available to consumers today.
- The Canadian meat industry has demonstrated through concrete action its commitment to voluntarily lowering the sodium content of prepared meats. Timely decisions and actions by both Health Canada (*Food and Drug Regulations*) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (*Meat Inspection Regulations* and *Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures*) will enable the Canadian meat industry to fully engage in meeting the sodium reduction benchmarks.

Voluntary Reduction Successful

The Canadian Meat Council members support Canada's voluntary sodium reduction targets. Although meat processors are committed to achieving a reduction of sodium through voluntary measures, it is of critical importance also that the new reformulations do not jeopardize food safety.

.../2

MEAT...

GOOD FOR YOU.
GOOD FOR CANADA.

LA VIANDE...

BONNE POUR VOUS.
BONNE POUR LE CANADA.

Prepared meats are an important component of a balanced and healthy diet. Today, most Canadians eat an abundance of foods, but many do not obtain the nutrients they require for good health. Meat products constitute a valuable source of complete protein, iron, zinc, vitamins, and other important nutrients at affordable prices.

According to government data, processed meat formulas in the past have contributed 9% of the dietary sodium in the Canadian diet. In recent years, Canada's meat processors have been committed to providing Canadians with sodium-reduced options – as evidenced by the wide selection of sodium reduced processed meat products already available to consumers in grocery stores.

Critical also to the success of the voluntary sodium reduction strategy is consumer acceptance. If the sodium reduction strategy is to reach its full potential, consumers must be informed and aware of the health benefits from reducing their sodium intake and need to accept the associated sensory changes in foods.

Some Salt is Essential

Salt is an essential ingredient in the processing of many foods. In the case of meat products, it is used as flavouring, a preservative and an antibacterial agent; it also has many positive effects on the texture and structure of foods. Salt, or sodium chloride, is a well known anti-microbial and is therefore a contributor worldwide to both food safety and product shelf-life.

Sodium Reduction Ingrained

The Canadian meat and poultry industries have incorporated the 2016 recommended benchmarks for sodium into their business planning. For example:

- it is now common practice that new processed meat products are developed to comply with the 2016 guidelines and the necessary food safety requirements of the marketplace, and
- numerous traditional products have already been reformulated to meet the 2016 guidelines.

Challenges to Further Reductions

Some of the sodium reduction targets proposed by Health Canada cannot be viably met because of government regulations that prescribe the use of minimum amounts of salt in the

.../3

MEAT...
GOOD FOR YOU.
GOOD FOR CANADA.

LA VIANDE...
BONNE POUR VOUS.
BONNE POUR LE CANADA.

manufacturing of certain prepared meat products. Measures on which the Canadian Meat Council is awaiting decisions from Health Canada are:

- use of a time/temperature equation rather than minimum amounts of salt as the metric to determine whether heat treated products containing nitrite need to be submitted to rapid or slow cooling as the food safety measure. This approach is used in other jurisdictions, including the U.S.; and
- recognition of the equivalent effectiveness of potassium chloride (KCl) to salt so that KCl may be used as a partial substitute for salt in these formulations.

Furthermore, the Canadian Meat Council encourages amendments to the *Food and Drug Regulations* to ensure that the serving sizes used in the Nutrition Facts table be as uniform as possible to facilitate the comparison of sodium levels in similar foods.

Timely resolution of these issues would enable the Canadian meat industry to progress even further in reducing the sodium content of processed meats.

Pioneering Spirit Continues

The Canadian meat industry has a long history of being a pioneer in product innovation. Recent achievements include reducing fat and incorporating natural ingredients. Applying this innovative spirit to sodium reduction maintains the industry's record as a leader in health innovation.