Connecting Public Health and the Food Industry: Voluntary Commitments to Reduce Sodium

Amy Loew, MS, RD
May 10, 2016
• Factors leading to General Mills’ (GMI) voluntary commitment

• Approaches used to reduce sodium

• Results of commitment

• Summary and next steps
GMI’s Voluntary Sodium Commitment

April 2010 public announcement:

• Reduce sodium by 20% in 10 key US retail product categories by end of 2015

• Sodium reduction is part of our overall commitment to improve the health profile of our products
  • See our 2016 Global Responsibility Report for more information

• 20% goal was purposefully challenging and aggressive

• Broad public health interest in sodium reduction
Background on Commitment

- Focused where we could make the greatest impact
  - Categories based on sales volume and impact of sodium reduction
    - Example: yogurt not included
  - Used weighted averages based on sales volume and sodium/serving
    - High volume products have more impact than low volume

- 10 Categories: cereals, dry dinners, frozen pizza, Mexican dinners, refrigerated dough, savory snacks, canned veg, side dishes, soups and variety baking mixes
Taste is the main driver of consumer food purchases!
• Salt plays a key role in consumer taste preferences

**Our Approach:**
• Small, incremental steps
  • Deliver taste consumers expect
  • Reduce sodium gradually, over time
  • Give consumers time to adapt to lower sodium levels

• Silent, “stealth” changes
  • Sodium reductions not advertised
  • Most consumers associate “lower sodium” with “bad tasting”
### Polling Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What function(s) does sodium play in food?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Shelf Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Food Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. All of the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are some key sources of sodium in food?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Flavors, spices and seasonings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Baking soda and baking powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Naturally occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. All of the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sodium plays multiple roles
- Taste
- Texture
- Shelf life
- Food safety

Many sources of sodium
- Salt
- Baking soda and powder
- Flavors, spices and seasonings
- Naturally occurring

There is no single technological solution across all products or within a category.

Sodium Reduction: Not A “One Size Fits All” Solution
Sodium Reduction Approaches

- Reduced salt
- Switched to different leavening ingredients

- Lower sodium category
- Balance between salt, sugar & fat
- Reduced salt

- Reduced salt
- Increased & enhanced flavors & spices

- Optimized seasoning blend
- Adjusted placement of sodium
Results of General Mills Commitment

• Met or exceeded 20% reduction goal in 7 of 10 categories
  • >350 products
  • >1/3 of US Retail Volume

Final weighted sodium reduction percentages
Summary and Next Steps

• Taste is the most important attribute of a food! A food must meet consumer taste expectations, or it won’t be consumed.

• Sodium reduction is extremely challenging – it is not simply reducing salt:
  • Sodium has many critical functions in food – taste, texture, shelf life and food safety
  • Small, incremental changes are more acceptable and sustainable than dramatic, extreme changes

• What’s next?
  • GMI has taken a leadership role in helping consumers meet public health recommendations - this commitment is a significant step in the right direction
  • Anticipate FDA category targets