Promotion of the reduced salt consumption

The main objective of the project is to evaluate data on salt intake by Lithuanian population, to review available scientific information on salt-related health concerns, to perform laboratory testing of salt content in particular food categories and to provide with recommendations on reduction of salt intake for food industry and population.

WHO Global strategy on diet, physical activity and health emphasizes health-promoting behaviours, including healthy diets, and recommends limiting salt (sodium) consumption from all sources.

Commission of the European Communities in the White paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues encourages Member States of the European Union and food industry to reformulate foods in terms of their levels of salt.

Targets:
- Evaluate data on salt intake and dietary habits of Lithuanian population
- Review available scientific information on salt-related health concerns:
- Perform laboratory testing of salt content in particular food categories
- Provide with recommendations on reduction of salt intake for food industry
- Training of food inspectors
- Public awareness: communication on the media, tips on reduction of salt intake, QUIZ on dietary sodium reduction for school children
Salt (sodium) has been of interest in public health nutrition for decades predominantly due to its association with hypertension and cardiovascular diseases especially coronary heart disease and stroke. It appears from the majority of evidence that, for the majority of the individuals, the higher sodium consumption, the higher their blood pressure will be. High sodium consumption has also been linked to kidney disease, bone mineral loss and risk of osteoporosis, and certain types of cancers. There is also evidence of increased effectiveness of decreased sodium intake on reducing hypertension in certain population subgroups. Therefore reducing salt intake is a crucial factor in lowering the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Cardiovascular diseases are highly important public health issue in Lithuania. Cardiovascular diseases were the main death cause in 2010 in Lithuania (47 % men and 65.5 % women). Prevalence of cardiovascular diseases in adult population is 23 %.

The most current **WHO recommendation** for the general population is to reduce the consumption of sodium to below 90 mmol (< 5g salt) per day.

**High sodium (salt) consumption** is typical for Lithuanian population. According to Food consumption survey in adult Lithuanian population (National Nutrition centre, 1997, 2007) in 1997 m. average salt intake was 10,75 g, in 2007 m. it decreased till 8,75 g but still was above WHO recommended maximum limit (5 g per day) (Fig. 1). 6,6 % of Lithuanians add salt to food even before taste it.

Over 700 samples were analysed in National Food and Veterinary Risk Assessment Institute as to estimate salt content in particular food categories (Fig. 2). Average salt content in the products of daily consumption: cheese, meat products and bakery are presented in Fig. 3, 4, 5.
**Figure 1**

Salt consumption in Lithuania

![Bar chart showing salt consumption in Lithuania for men and women in 1997 and 2007, compared to the WHO recommendation.]  

**Figure 2**

Salt content in different food categories

![Bar chart showing the salt content in various food categories, such as fish, shellfish products, meat products, sauces, pickles, cheese and cheese products, potato chips, bakery, and curd products.](chart-url)
Expected final result of the project – reduced salt intake by Lithuanian population.