

Multi-Stakeholder Working Group on Sodium Reduction Terms of Reference¹

Purpose:

To develop and oversee implementation of a strategy that would result in lowering the sodium content of the diets of Canadians to within the range recommended by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) report for sodium)².

Mandate of the Working Group:

Under the leadership of Health Canada, the multi-stakeholder Working Group (WG) will develop, implement and oversee a population-health strategy for the successful reduction of the sodium content of the diets of Canadians to be in line with the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies DRI Report.

The strategy will be multi-staged and will be based on a three-pronged approach that would include education, voluntary reduction of sodium levels in processed food products and foods sold in food service establishments, and research.

The work will include the following stages:

1. Preparatory Stage: (ongoing to April 2008)

Information requirements for the inaugural meeting of the WG:

- Compile baseline data on the sodium levels in the diets of Canadians and the primary sources of dietary sodium.
- Prepare a synopsis of the UK Food Standards Agency's program on salt reduction so that the WG may learn from their experiences in developing initiatives for the Canadian context.
- Prepare It's Your Health (IYH) fact sheet related to dietary sodium.

¹ prepared with the input from the Food & Consumer Products of Canada (FCPC), Blood Pressure Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and Health Canada; adopted by the Working Group, May 23, 2008

² Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Food and Nutrition Board. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Water, Potassium, Sodium, Chloride, and Sulfate*. (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2004)

2. Assessment Stage: (April, 2008 - October, 2008)

Initiate a data gathering process on work underway to:

- Educate/inform consumers and health professionals on sodium, hypertension and health.
- Voluntarily reduce sodium levels in processed food products and foodservice foods.
- Understand better the consumer's perspective on sodium as a risk factor in hypertension and their perception of efforts in place to reduce sodium in processed food products and foodservice foods.
- Understand how taste and other mechanisms factor into food choices with respect to sodium.
- Understand the functional uses of sodium and also the technical/functional challenges associated with reducing sodium levels in the food supply and the actual and potential solutions to overcome these challenges.
- Information on regulatory barriers or disincentives to reducing sodium content of foods

3. Development of Strategic Framework: (November 2008 - March, 2009)

- Develop a Strategic Framework that includes goals, action plans with timelines to guide implementation and methods of assessment to determine success.
- Consult the wider stakeholder community (as needed) to seek input and/or commitment to action for dietary sodium reduction.
- The approach will be evaluated for effectiveness and will include consideration of other policy options as required to achieve the goals.

4. Implementation Stage: (April 2009- onwards)

The multi-stakeholder Working Group will oversee implementation and monitor progress according to timelines and methods of assessment outlined in the Strategic Framework.

Guiding Principles:

- All stakeholder communities with an interest in this public health matter will be represented on the WG by an organization from their respective stakeholder community. The stakeholder communities that will be represented on the WG include: government agencies, the scientific community, the health professional community, health-focused non-governmental organizations, food manufacturing and restaurant and food service industry, and consumer-advocacy groups.
- The individuals from stakeholder organizations sitting on the WG representing their stakeholder community will be expected to respect the purpose of the WG and contribute towards both the development and the implementation of the Strategic Framework.
- The individuals from stakeholder organizations sitting on the WG representing their stakeholder community will be expected to keep their stakeholder community informed of the work of the WG and consult with their stakeholder community as required by the WG.
- The Strategic Framework developed will be based on sound scientific research and analysis of information and result in goals based on the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies DRI Report recommendations. Action plans and timelines will be practical, feasible and result in making a difference in the health of Canadians.
- Individuals on the WG representing their stakeholder community will be expected to work together in a respectful manner with a willingness to listen to all perspectives/opinions brought to bear on how to address this public health matter.
- Individuals on the WG representing their stakeholder community will be expected to respect the purpose of all meetings and not use the meetings as opportunities to advance discussion on other matters.
- Decisions will be made based on consensus amongst the WG members. (Definition of consensus to be established by the WG).

Reporting & Consultations:

Health Canada will provide oversight of the WG and be the body that confirms progress against established goals. The WG will report back to Health Canada throughout the duration of its life with respect to development and implementation of the Strategic Framework. The WG will inform/involve the wider stakeholder community at key stages of its work. Also, the WG will create opportunities for the wider stakeholder community to comment and will call for reports and presentations as needed.

Membership:

The members of the WG will be knowledgeable individuals, capable of providing advice and assistance on how to effectively reduce sodium levels in the diets of Canadians. The WG will incorporate a balanced perspective from a wide range of interested parties with participation from government agencies, the scientific community, the health professional community, health-focused non-governmental organizations, the food manufacturing industry, the restaurant and food service industry, and consumer-advocacy groups.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Chair: Director, Bureau of Nutritional Sciences, Health Canada - facilitates the process.

Steering Committee: The Chair, a WG member from food industry/food service stakeholder community and a WG member from the health professional/health-focused NGO stakeholder community will comprise the Steering Committee.

This committee will monitor momentum and progress against the work plan and identify areas of concern for the full WG to address. The Steering Committee will also be responsible for the orientation of new representatives to the WG as required.

Secretariat: Secretariat will be provided by Health Canada and will work with the Chair and the Steering Committee to support the WG, including preparation and organization of meetings, maintaining records of decisions made in developing the Strategic Framework and providing the secure website.

Working Group members: Each member has a responsibility for participating in meetings and ensuring the success of the WG's task at hand. Representatives were chosen for their expertise and knowledge in various areas related to dietary sodium. The views expressed in discussion are expected to be the expert opinions of the individual members and do not necessarily reflect the views of their respective organizations. Members are

expected to inform the Working Group of their respective organizational views, however they are to make decisions in the best interest of the Working Group and its stated goals. All WG representatives will have roles in monitoring and reporting back on progress against the Strategic Framework.

Term: Each stakeholder organization asked to become part of the WG will appoint a representative at the onset. Each stakeholder organization with a representative on the WG at its onset will continue on the WG for the life duration of the working group. (The lifespan of the WG will be determined in Stage Two). While it is desirable that membership remains stable, if circumstances force the withdrawal of an organization, the WG will suggest a suitable alternative to Health Canada. Representatives can be changed based on the needs of the specific stakeholder organization. Each stakeholder organization will be responsible for providing its new representative with an orientation to the file and all the materials associated with the business of the WG.

Funding: Each stakeholder organization participating in the WG will be expected to contribute to the work of the WG either by direct financial contribution, intellectual contribution and/or in-kind services.

Health Canada will provide financial support to cover the travel expenses of the WG members who require support to participate in WG meetings (i.e. for academia and NGO members).

Meetings will be conducted face-to-face, by teleconference call and by video conference. The communication between the WG members will be conducted via a secure website and by electronic means.

Final stakeholder representation on WG:

Health Canada: Chair
Scientific & Health-professional Community - 5
Health-focused & Consumer Non-governmental Organizations - 5
Food Manufacturing & Food-service Industry - 7
Government - 6

Stakeholder Organizations represented on WG:

Chair: Director, Health Canada, Bureau of Nutritional Sciences

Individuals representing the following stakeholders:

Scientific & Health-professional community:

1. CIHR Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health
2. Canadian Stroke Network
3. Canadian Society for Nutritional Sciences
4. Dietitians of Canada
5. Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health

Health-focused & Consumer Non-governmental Organizations (NGO)

1. Blood Pressure Canada
2. Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada
3. The Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition
4. Centre for Science in the Public Interest
5. Extenso - Reference Centre for Human Nutrition.

Food manufacturing industry:

1. Baking Association of Canada
2. Canadian Meat Council
3. Dairy Processors of Canada
4. Food and Consumer Products of Canada
5. Food Processors of Canada
6. Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors

Food service industry:

1. Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association

Government agencies:

1. Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion
2. Public Health Agency of Canada
3. Food Directorate
4. Federal Provincial Territorial Group on Nutrition
5. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
6. Canadian Food Inspection Agency