



Embargoed for 00.01 on Tuesday 12 March 2013

CASH Comment on Department of Health press release ‘GOVERNMENT DRIVE TO HELP CUT SALT CONSUMPTION BY A QUARTER’

CASH strongly supports government’s new commitment to help cut salt intake, but calls for the government to consider legislation to ensure the cooperation of the whole of the food industry.

The release of the new salt reduction strategy, to coincide with National Salt Awareness Week 2013, is particularly welcome in view of the fact that Andrew Lansley, the previous Secretary of State for Health had taken the responsibility for salt reduction from the Food Standards Agency to the Department of Health. This resulted in the momentum for salt reduction being lost, particularly as he controversially made the food industry responsible for improving their products - which was likened to putting *‘Dracula in charge of the Blood Bank’* (Professor Simon Capewell [1]).

We are therefore particularly pleased to see that the new Public Health Minister Anna Soubry MP is committing to set lower salt targets and to continue the vital work of slowly reducing the amount of salt that the food industry add to food (75% of the salt we eat is still hidden in food) and at the same time, to encourage more caterers to sign up to the Responsibility Deal.

We also approve of the initiative to get more caterers signed up to the Responsibility Deal, as CASH’s restaurant survey [2], released yesterday for Salt Awareness Week 2013, showed once again the incredibly high amounts of salt are still used not only in celebrity chef restaurants but in high street restaurants, cafes and fast food chains.

However to get the industry to act will require a much more aggressive stance by the Department of Health than merely asking the food industry to cooperate.

Professor Graham MacGregor, Professor of cardiovascular medicine at Queen Mary, University of London, and Chairman of CASH:

“The UK, through the work of CASH and the Food Standards Agency, has already resulted in a 15% reduction in salt intake, saving more than 9,000 lives from strokes and heart attacks every year. Salt reduction is the single most cost-effective public health intervention, and the UK has led the world. Whilst we strongly support the new initiative, we must now consider legislation to ensure all sections of the food industry do comply”.

1 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/feedarticle/10409897>

2 <http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/news/surveys/2013/Chef%20Survey/92404.html>