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SAN SALVADOR, 27 MAY 2010

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ENGLAND

Laws are needed to save lives and reduce salt WHO

"If we managed to reduce salt consumption by up to 15% by 2015 would have prevented at least 9 million deaths worldwide

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REUTERS
TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2010

Governments around the world could save health care costs and prevent millions of premature deaths if they introduce legislation to reduce salt levels in food, said Tuesday a top aide nutritional World Health Organization (WHO).



80% of the salt that the human being when you eat away from home comes from the chefs, while the other 20% comes from salt cellars, where everyone chooses to taste the amount added. PHOTO / EDH

Franco Cappuccio, head of the collaborating center of WHO for nutrition, said that voluntary measures in the food industry had resulted in some progress, but that lawmakers must now seize the scientific evidence on salt and induce changes in the tastes of the nations.

"There is total consensus that salt is bad for us, we eat too much and we should consume less," Cappuccio said in an interview with Reuters.

"So there is a broad spectrum to consider a regulatory approach to strengthen and sustain the voluntary measures," he added.

But Cappuccio, professor of cardiovascular medicine at the Warwick University, which is based on WHO's nutrition center, said the powerful pressure of the beverage industry and food, whose earnings are growing thanks to the added salt, it took the efforts to reduce consumption.

Reducing salt intake helps lower blood pressure substantially, which in turn reduces the risk of heart attacks and strokes (CVA). Hypertension is the leading cause of death worldwide, with 7.5 million deaths per year.

A study in 2007 analyzed all the evidence available at this time and found that cutting salt intake by 15% could prevent about 9 million deaths by 2015.

Another work in March showed that a reduction of only 10% in the United States could prevent hundreds of thousands of heart attacks and strokes and allow the government to save U.S. \$ 32.000 billion in health costs.

There is little doubt that we eat too much salt. In Britain, the average adult consumption is about 8.6 grams per day, while in the United States is 10 grams, almost twice as suggested by WHO.

Until the recommendation of the United Nations agency to eat five grams of salt in excess of the 1.5 grams that need to live.

SAL UP MAKING PROFIT

"Most of the salt consumed in the Western world, in fact, about 80% comes from salt added to foods and only 20 percent comes from salt or salt used for cooking," said Cappuccio.

"In terms of freedom of the consumer, actually we have no choice. In short, multinationals feed most of the world," he added.

Food manufacturers use salt to enhance the flavor of the food that would otherwise be tasteless, thirst and to raise consumers drink more soft drinks and increased profits from meat products.

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However, he acknowledged that there are some positive aspects.

In the U.S., the Health Department City of New York is leading a "National Initiative for Reduction of Salt" for cities, states and health organizations working with food manufacturers and restaurants to reduce 20% of salt consumption in the next five years.

In Britain, public campaigns and the efforts of the Food Standards Agency to work with manufacturers to promote reduced use of salt helped the average daily consumption fell from about 8.6 grams to 10 grams ago decade.

"We know from scientific studies that reducing salt intake a little each day, every week and every month (...) you can control the palate," said Cappuccio.

"So we can hold people, and the whole population, to enjoy food with less salt," he concluded.



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