

Update to Dairy Industry Action Plan for Salt Reductions

Please note that this update should be read in conjunction with the Dairy Industry Action Plan dated 27th February 2004, already submitted, a further copy of which is attached.

Dairy UK would continue to emphasise that salt is not widely used in the manufacture of dairy products. Most dairy products such as milk, yogurt, and dairy desserts **contain no added salt**.

Butter is available in salted and unsalted varieties.

Salt is used in the manufacture of a wide variety of ripened cheeses and is an integral part of the cheese-making process.

Actions since our initial plan was submitted include the following:

1. DAIRY UK has calculated a salt model for cheese in which the salt intake from a diet consisting of various cheeses can be calculated. This could allow changes in salt dietary intake to be calculated if the salt content of particular cheeses can be reduced. The data used in the calculation is taken from McCance and Widdowson, analyses provided by member companies, and data from the French equivalent of the Food Standards Agency (Agence française de sécurité sanitaire des aliments.)

Examples of the salt content of 30g of various cheeses is as follows:

Cheese Variety	Amount of salt in 30g of cheese
Blue Stilton	0.6g
Brie	0.4g
Camembert	0.5g
Cheddar	0.5g
Cheshire	0.4g
Comté	0.2g
Danish Blue	0.9g
Double Gloucester	0.5g
Edam	0.8g
Feta	1.1g
Gouda	0.7g
Lancashire	0.4g
Parmesan	0.6g
Red Leicester	0.5g
Roquefort	1.2g

The model shows that using an annual retail cheese consumption of 334,000 tonnes, and the UK population of 59 million, the average daily cheese consumption is 15.5 grams, and the average salt intake is 0.3g.

2. DAIRY UK has sought to raise the awareness of the salt issue among its members by means of various circulars and newsletter items. DAIRY UK will be contributing an article on salt to the October issue of Milk Industry.
3. Actions by cheese manufacturers to date include:
 - a) Cheddar cheese**

One major manufacturer has reduced the salt content of medium and mature cheddar from 2.0% to 1.89% (a reduction of 5.5%.)

Other manufacturers are attempting to control better their salting process with a view to reducing their standard deviations.
 - b) Stilton cheese**

Stilton makers have already reduced their salt contents to the lowest they consider possible but are investigating further small reductions and improved process control. The annex gives fuller information.
 - c) Processed cheese**

One major manufacturer has reduced salt contents by about 30% to approximately 2.2%. It should be noted that many processed cheese products are manufactured under the retailers' own-label, and any reformulation requires the retailers' agreement.
 - d) Fresh cheese**

One manufacturer reports a reduction in salt content from 0.8% to 0.65%, a reduction of 18%.
 - e) Cheese as a food ingredient**

Cheese is used as a pizza topping, in sandwiches and ready meals (pasta, lasagne etc). Manufacturers are attempting to reduce or control better the salt contents of cheeses for these applications.
4. Following discussions with the Food Standards Agency the dairy industry will aim to achieve a 5% reduction over the course of the next 12 months in the salt content of UK produced ripened cheese, with the possibility of a further 5% reduction 12 months later.

Dr E S Komorowski
Technical Director

17th September 2004

ANNEX
STILTON CHEESE MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

Salt levels in Stilton Cheese

Salt is an essential ingredient in the cheese making process. In the manufacture of blue cheese salt plays an additional role in helping to achieve the correct development of the blue veining and flavour. Because each Stilton cheese is unpressed and is a relatively large cheese (7.5 to 8.0 kgs) there will be a degree of variation in the moisture and salt levels in different parts of the cheese.

It should also be noted that salt levels in Stilton will naturally vary depending on the age of the cheese. Stilton loses some moisture during maturation and hence the salt per cent will increase as the cheese ages,

Of all the blue cheeses, Stilton has amongst the lowest level of salt as evidenced by data published in McCance & Widdowson and as shown on the nutritional labelling of products currently sold on the UK market:

	<u>Mgs of sodium per</u> 100 gms of cheese
- Blue Stilton	788
- Danish blue	1220
- Gorgonzola	900*
- Roquefort	1670

- From nutrition label on product – all others from McCance & Widdowson – 6th Summary Edition

Blue Cheese accounts for 2% of UK cheese sales (including fromage frais and cottage cheese) and 3% of estimated sodium consumed in all cheese. Stilton accounts for just over 1 % (1.04%) of UK cheese sales and 1.23% of total sodium estimated to be consumed in cheese.

A small reduction in the salt content of Stilton – even if technically feasible and acceptable to customers – would make an insignificant impact on total sodium intake.

However, the Salt Reduction campaign launched by the FSA/Dept of Health has focused the attention of makers on what might be done to make a contribution – albeit small – to the overall reduction in sodium intake in the UK population. Through the Stilton Cheese Makers' Association, members are supplying confidential data on their monthly average salt levels in Blue Stilton prior to sale. This has revealed some variations in salt levels both within a single manufacturer from month to month and between manufacturers in a single month. Technical and

production staff are now concentrating their attention on how these variations might be reduced. In some cases this might lead to a small reduction in the average salt level in the cheese of an individual dairy; in others it may lead to a reduction in the standard deviation around the mean.

It's too early to report on the outcome of this work, but there is a determination to improve from where we are at the moment. One thing uppermost in our minds is that we must not change the character of the product. "Blue Stilton" is a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) made to a traditional recipe and it is vital that in attempting to reduce salt levels we do not undermine the quality or character of the product.

SCMA
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