

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-463
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/01458/13

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

5 July 2013

Dea William

Thank you for your letter of 26 June regarding a petition from Harry Hayfield calling upon the Welsh Government to reduce the level of salt in food.

The Welsh Government seeks to encourage a healthy balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. A healthy diet is one that contains no more than 6g of salt per day for an adult, and less for a child. We recognise that achieving the public health goal of consuming no more than 6g of salt per person per day will necessitate action across the whole industry - retailers, manufacturers and caterers, Government, non Governmental organisations and individuals.

Around 75% of salt is hidden in food, so the food and drink and catering industries have a significant role to play in supporting the people of Wales to eat a healthier diet by reducing the amount of salt as well as saturated fat, and sugar in their products, and improving access to healthier products. Average daily salt intakes of UK adults is currently 8.6g, which is a reduction of about 10% (from 9.5g) since 2001

The Welsh Government supports the salt targets that were initially developed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The salt targets have been developed for 80 specific food groups that contribute most to population's salt intakes and include dietary staples, such as processed meats, bread and cheese, as well as convenience foods such as, ready meals, soups, pasta sauces, pizzas and sandwiches and snacks. The 2012 targets which are currently in place while the 2013 targets are developed, comprise the third generation of targets which have been developed since 2006, and through a stepwise approach have evolved to account for reductions achieved, salt levels in products, technical constraints, food safety issues, consumer acceptability, independent advice and data on salt intakes.

Prior to October 2010, work on reformulation and healthier catering was led by the FSA on a UK-wide basis. Most of the major manufacturers, retailers and caterers operate at this level. However, since machinery of government changes, this area of work is now being taken

forward in England under the Public Health Responsibility Deal. This encourages food businesses to be responsible and to commit to healthier food provision. In Wales, there is less scope to pursue this agenda on a Welsh-specific level, as those businesses which serve the majority of the population are England-based and/or operate on a UK basis. However, the Welsh Government continues, where feasible, to encourage Welsh businesses to provide healthier products, such as working towards the Government 2012 salt targets, and we support local authorities in promoting reformulation and healthier catering. The Department for Health is developing salt targets for catered foods and we will be encouraging caterers in Wales to work towards these and considering their use in the Local Authority run Healthy Options Awards which recognises and encourages provision of healthier options in local catering outlets.

Finally, the Welsh Government in conjunction with the other UK Governments, has worked together with stakeholders to introduce one uniform front of pack (FoP) nutrition labelling scheme which combines traffic light colours and reference intakes (RIs, formerly known as Guideline Daily Amounts). This means that products bearing the label will contain information that can be interpreted at a glance for salt, as well as for fat, saturated fat, sugar and calories. Evidence suggests that the use of FoP labels drives reformulation, as companies do not want unhealthy profiles for their products, and will strive towards better profiles with more amber and green lights. The FoP labels are especially good in supporting consumers to make a healthy choice within a food type, for instance, choosing a healthier pizza, sandwich or ready meal

I hope this has helped clarify the position.

Best wishes

Mark.

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services