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## Increasing potassium-enriched salt use in Australia— understanding the salt supply chain

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Excess sodium consumption, mostly from dietary salt, causes high blood pressure and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease<sup>(1)</sup>. In parallel, insufficient potassium intake also contributes to raised blood pressure<sup>(2)</sup>. Switching regular salt for potassium-enriched salt, where a proportion of the sodium chloride is replaced with potassium chloride, is a promising public health intervention to address both these issues<sup>(3)</sup>. However, the supply chain to support increased use of potassium-enriched salt in Australia is not well understood. The objectives of this study were to investigate how the salt supply chain operates in Australia and to obtain food industry stakeholder perspectives on the technical barriers and enablers to increased potassium-enriched salt use. Twelve interviews with industry stakeholders (from food companies, salt manufacturers and trade associations) were conducted and thematically analysed using a template analysis method. Two top-level themes were developed: ‘supply chain practices’ and ‘technical barriers and enablers’. The potassium-enriched salt supply chain was described as less well-established than the low-cost production and distribution of regular salt in Australia. However, food companies reported not having difficulty sourcing potassium chloride. For Australian food industry stakeholders, cost, flavour and functionality were perceived as key barriers to increased uptake of potassium-enriched salt as a food ingredient. Stakeholders from food companies were hesitant to use potassium-enriched salt due to concerns about bitter or metallic flavours and uncertainty whether it would provide the same microbial/shelf-life functions or textural quality as regular salt. However, potassium-enriched salt manufacturers had divergent opinions stating potassium-enriched salt was a suitable functional replacement for regular salt and that flavour differences observed may be due to the incorrect use of potassium chloride as opposed to use of a purpose-made potassium-enriched salt. Stakeholders identified that establishing a stable and affordable supply of potassium-enriched salt in Australia and increased support for food technology research and development would enable increased use. To improve uptake of potassium-enriched salt by the Australian food industry, future efforts should focus on strengthening potassium-enriched salt supply chains and improving appeal for food industry to use in manufacturing and for consumers to purchase. Public health advocacy efforts should ensure that industry is equipped with the latest evidence on the feasibility and benefits of using potassium-enriched salt as an ingredient. Ongoing engagement is critical to ensure that industry is aware of their responsibility and opportunity to offer healthier foods to consumers by switching regular salt to potassium-enriched salt within foods.

### References

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