

Author: Adriana Blanco-Metzler

Co Author: María Montero-Campos (Costa Rican Institute of Research and Training in Nutrition and Health [INCIENSA]), Katrina Heredia-Blonval, Nazareth Cubillo, Karla Benavides-Aguilar (Programa para la reducción del consumo de sal/sodio en la población de Costa Rica), Virginia Alfaro, Hilda Núñez (Costa Rican Institute of Research and Training in Nutrition and Health [INCIENSA]), Branka Legetic (Advisor), Mary L´Abbe (University of Toronto)

Topic: The impact of food systems on nutrition, diet and health

Title: Experiences in Costa Rica implementing a comprehensive program for salt reduction

Presentation Type: Workshop

The Program for the Reduction of Salt/Sodium Consumption in Costa Rica was initiated in 2012, to implement the national plan for salt reduction. The action plan was based on the World Health Organization (WHO) strategy to reduce cardiovascular disease by decreasing salt intake across population. By research, it provides baseline information to support the three platforms of a WHO successful program and encourages effective public health policies. Objective: To present the experiences of the implementation of the Program. Sodium intake in the population was estimated, food sources identified, sodium content declared in nutrition labeling verified and supply of processed foods and fast foods was characterized through research. This knowledge was used in the establishment of sodium reduction targets in key categories of processed foods. Also, the importance of cultural diversity and the influence of socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices with salt in decision-making were demonstrated. The results will serve as an input to design a social marketing strategy to raise awareness in the target population. Changes in the environment: the results of the Program have encouraged food producers to highlight in food products the nutritional properties associated primarily with sodium, updating nutrition labeling legislation, lobbying with the fortification salt program and improving the analytical capabilities in national laboratories. The comprehensive approach based on scientific evidence of the Program is allowing Costa Rica to advance toward the achievement of the international goal in line with the effort of other countries of the region. (IDRC project # 106888)