

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Department of Health & Social Care  
Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries Unit  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Re: UK's Leading Salt Reduction Policy in Jeopardy Following Closure of Public Health England**

The UK's salt reduction programme is a pioneering and successful public health policy which encouraged the food industry to slowly remove the huge and unnecessary amounts of salt they add to our food. This has led to a fall in salt intake in the whole UK population and thereby population blood pressure, which is estimated to have saved 18,000 stroke and heart attack events each year, 9,000 of which would have been fatal<sup>1</sup>. Independent research by NICE revealed that the salt reduction programme has led to annual healthcare savings of £1.5bn<sup>2</sup>.

Despite being copied all over the world, in the last few years the policy has failed to further reduce salt intake with the latest National Diet and Nutrition Survey measurement finding an intake of 8.4g/day in 2018/19 compared to 8g/day in 2014. However, salt reduction is an excellent example of a policy that can be implemented quietly and efficiently, without asking the public to change their behaviour. Over time, taste buds adapt to the less salty taste of food making it sustainable, cost-effective and hugely beneficial for health.

There is no doubt, when considering the history of salt reduction in the UK and the world, that where there is a strong independent agency that is not subject to food industry pressure or political pressure, this is when the policy has been successful. It is absolutely vital that we resuscitate what was a very successful national public health policy but it needs strong independent leadership to continue that success.

We would very much like to discuss this with you or your officials to ensure the UK continues to lead the world in salt reduction, saving thousands of people from dying needlessly from strokes and heart disease.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Graham MacGregor**

Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine, Queen Mary University of London and Chair of Action on Salt and Blood Pressure UK

**Ms Katharine Jenner**

CEO, Blood Pressure UK

**Professor Simon Capewell**

Professor of Public Health and Policy, University of Liverpool

<sup>1</sup> He FJ, Pombo-Rodrigues S, MacGregor GA. Salt reduction in England from 2003 to 2011: its relationship to blood pressure, stroke and ischaemic heart disease mortality. *BMJ Open* 2014;4:e004549. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2013-004549

<sup>2</sup> National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Guidance on the prevention of cardiovascular disease at the population level. <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH25>



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