



Communication strategy

for the Mandatory Fortification with Iodine

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1 Introduction

The Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council has requested Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to consider mandatory fortification of the food supply with iodine to address the deficiency of iodine in the populations of Australia and New Zealand. Following consultations FSANZ has prepared a mandatory fortification standard requiring the salt in bread to be replaced with iodised salt. Subject to the necessary approvals, the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* draft Standard will become law approximately two years after gazettal.

This allows time for the salt industry to increase its iodised salt production and for bread manufacturers to make the required changes to their manufacturing and labelling processes. It will also allow time for consumers to be informed about the changes.

It is NZFSA's role to communicate with New Zealand companies about implementing standards, to monitor and enforce standards in New Zealand and to communicate to, and inform New Zealand consumers. The Ministry of Health has the leadership role for the New Zealand health sector. This includes monitoring health status, developing nutrition policy, and providing advice to health professionals and the public on population health issues, such as adequate iodine intakes.

This communication strategy has been developed by NZFSA and the Ministry of Health to facilitate communication between consumers, food industry groups, media, and government departments. FSANZ has prepared a communication and education strategy that is specific to Australian audiences, however since the New Zealand situation is unique in terms of the soil levels and food sources of iodine, ethnic diversity, and media channels NZFSA and the Ministry of Health deem it necessary to provide a distinct New Zealand strategy.

Where appropriate, NZFSA and the Ministry of Health will work with FSANZ to amend information resources, originally developed for Australian audiences, for New Zealand.

2 Communication Objectives

- To inform consumers about the issues around iodine and why this standard is being introduced
- To communicate with health professionals about the change to the standard and provide them with information for their clients
- To educate industry about the new standard

3 High level key messages

The key messages for all target audiences

1) What is iodine?

- Iodine is an essential nutrient found in many foods, though often in very small amounts.
- A very low iodine intake can affect a child's mental development, growth, hearing, coordination and alertness, and the effect is irreversible if it occurs before the child is three years old.
- Low iodine intakes may also cause the thyroid gland in the neck to become enlarged, a condition known as goitre. This increases the risk of thyroid diseases in later life.
- Soils in New Zealand tend to be low in iodine, so foods grown in our soil are also low in iodine.
- Important dietary sources of iodine include bread fortified with iodised salt, low-fat milk and milk products, eggs, fish, other seafood, seameal custard, and iodised salt.
- The form of iodine naturally occurring in food such as seafood or used in iodised salt is unlikely to cause adverse reactions.
- Kelp supplements can contain very high and variable levels of iodine, and are not recommended.

2) Why mandatory iodine fortification of bread?

- Iodine levels in New Zealand soil are low, so there are low concentrations of iodine in locally grown foods.
- Research evidence shows iodine deficiency is re-emerging right across the New Zealand population and in all regions of New Zealand.
- Inadequate iodine in the diet can affect people of all ages, but babies, young children, and pregnant and breastfeeding women are most at risk.
- Iodine is essential for the normal development of children's brains and nervous systems, especially during pregnancy and in the first two to three years of life.
- We want to ensure people get enough iodine in their diet by increasing the iodine content of the food supply through mandatory fortification - requiring that iodised salt replaces non-iodised salt in bread

3) How will mandatory iodine fortification affect me?

- Iodine fortification will enable people to increase their iodine intake without making major dietary changes.
- The bread you buy (with the exception of organic and unleavened bread) will be fortified with iodised salt.
- The cost to consumers is likely to be minimal.
- The risk of adverse health effects from this extra iodine is small across all groups.

4) Am I at risk of consuming too much iodine?

- Individuals are very unlikely to consume too much iodine from food alone, including fortified foods.
- Individuals who consume kelp supplements need to be aware that the level of iodine in these products varies and may be excessive.
- Adequate iodine is essential for good health and the current problem in New Zealand is that we are not getting enough iodine. We need to increase our iodine intake by selecting foods that are good sources of iodine including foods fortified with iodine. However, it is also possible to consume too much iodine for good health. This is the reason that we are not recommending use of kelp or other supplements that have very high concentrations of iodine. If in doubt you should discuss this with your doctor or dietitian.

4 Audience Analysis (Stakeholders)

4.1 Primary Audiences

- people or groups who will be affected by this subject, or whose behaviour our communications aim to influence or change

For women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
Iodine is essential for the mother and for her baby's growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant need to ensure good thyroid health for themselves and their baby, and this is dependent on iodine levels. Since requirements for iodine increase during pregnancy and breastfeeding, all women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant should ask their health professional for advice about their individual dietary needs. Bread fortified with iodised salt is a good source of iodine. Other good sources include low-fat milk and milk products, eggs, fish, other seafood, and seameal custard. If using salt at the table or in cooking, use iodised salt. Seaweed and kelp supplements are not recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women. 	<p>Media releases</p> <p>Articles to family magazines</p> <p>Fact sheet through health professionals</p> <p>Website</p> <p>Food and lifestyle magazines</p>

For parents of young children		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
Iodine is essential for their child's growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breast milk reflects the iodine status of the mother. Good sources of iodine include bread fortified with iodised salt, milk and milk products, eggs, fish, and other seafood. Foods containing seaweed, such as sushi and seameal custard, are also good sources. The New Zealand Food and Nutrition Guidelines (published by the Ministry of Health) provide comprehensive dietary advice for good health and recommend choosing foods low in salt, particularly pre-prepared foods, drinks and snacks. Young children should not use extra table salt or salt in cooking, but ensure that when they have salt it is iodised salt. Kelp supplements are not recommended for children. A very low iodine intake can also affect a child's mental development, growth, hearing, coordination and alertness, and the effect is irreversible if it occurs before the child is three years old. 	Media releases Articles to family magazines Fact sheet/ brochure through health professionals Website
For individuals with thyroid disorders and/or possible iodine sensitivities		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
Iodine is essential for good health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The form of iodine occurring in food such as seafood or used in iodised salt has not been linked to any type of adverse reactions or allergies. Iodine fortification is set at a conservative level that makes it unlikely to cause any adverse reactions. General labelling laws requiring the listing of all a food's ingredients in the ingredient list will allow consumers either to select foods fortified with iodine or avoid them, depending upon their individual choice. Seek advice from your doctor about your individual requirements. 	Articles in medical publications Letters Fact sheet through health professionals Website Articles in professional magazines/newsletters Presentations at conferences/workshops Article in Public Health Perspectives Prescriber Update

For people who do not eat bread fortified with iodised salt		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
iodine is essential for good health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed standard maintains current voluntary permissions for manufacturers to iodise salt, while also making it mandatory for bread to be fortified with iodine. Current voluntary provisions provide potential alternative iodine sources for people who do not eat bread fortified with iodised salt. The presence of iodised salt must be identified in the ingredient list as a guide for consumers. Seek advice from a dietitian about your individual dietary requirements. Other dietary sources of iodine include milk and milk products, eggs, fish, other seafood, foods containing seaweed, such as sushi, and seameal custard. If using salt at the table or in cooking, use iodised salt. 	Media releases Articles to family magazines Fact sheet through health professionals Website Allergy New Zealand Coeliac Society of NZ
For people who do not want to consume iodine fortified foods		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
iodine is essential for good health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Zealand has a low level of iodine in the food supply and currently New Zealanders are not getting enough iodine for maintaining good health. Most people will need to consume iodine fortified foods or consume an iodine supplement to meet their needs. Organic and unleavened breads will not be required to use iodised salt. There is also the option of making your own bread. Consumers will be able to identify those foods fortified with iodine by looking at the ingredient list. Iodine fortification is set at a conservative level that makes it unlikely to cause any adverse reactions. 	Media releases Articles to family magazines Fact sheet through health professionals Website
For industry		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
Their regulatory obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bread manufacturers will be required to replace non-iodised salt in bread with iodised salt. The iodisation level must be in the range of 35-55 mg iodine per kg of salt. Organic and unleavened bread will be exempt from mandatory iodine fortification. The presence of iodised salt must be identified in the ingredient list to inform 	Media releases and articles in trade publications Letters FSC Food Control Plans

	<p>consumers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is technologically feasible to use iodised salt in bread making. • The proposed standard allows the current voluntary permissions for iodised salt to continue while also requiring the mandatory fortification of bread with iodine. • An Implementation Guide will be developed to clarify which foods will require the mandatory addition of iodised salt. • To give industry time to make the required changes to manufacturing and labelling, and to alert consumers to the changes, we are recommending a two year transition period for implementation after the standard becomes law. • Monitoring the proposed new standard will be essential. It will allow us to gauge both the ongoing effectiveness and safety of mandatory iodine fortification in reducing iodine deficiency in New Zealand. 	<p>Website Letters</p>
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For health professionals - Dietitians, Nurses, Midwives, and Plunket Nurses		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
Low iodine intakes are a concern in NZ, bread is being fortified with iodine to help address the problem; this might have effects for some of their clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good sources of iodine include bread fortified with iodised salt, milk and milk products, eggs, fish, and other seafood. Foods containing seaweed, such as sushi and seameal custard, are also good sources. • Organic and unleavened breads will not be required to use iodised salt. • Recommend that if using salt at the table or in cooking, use iodised salt. • Individuals with pre-existing thyroid disease are more sensitive to increases in iodine intake. • The proposed level of fortification is low and considered unlikely to aggravate existing thyroid disease. • Even with mandatory fortification, pregnant and breastfeeding women are likely to require daily iodine supplements to meet their recommended dietary intake. These women should consult their doctor or dietitian to discuss options for iodine supplementation. • If a suitable iodine supplement becomes available as a registered medicine, it may be appropriate to recommend this to pregnant or breastfeeding women. • Individuals with pre-existing thyroid disease, and women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant, may seek your advice about the need for additional iodine. • There is little evidence that 'iodine allergy' exists as a result of consuming iodine fortified foods. However a variety of complex iodine-containing materials, especially povidone-iodine used as an antiseptic on the skin in medical situations can cause irritation which may be severe and in some cases cause an allergic reaction. • Iodine fortification is set at a conservative level that makes it unlikely to cause any adverse reactions 	<p>Media releases</p> <p>Articles in medical publications</p> <p>Articles in professional magazines/newsletters</p> <p>Presentations at conferences/workshops</p> <p>Letters</p> <p>Website</p>
For doctors - General Practitioners, Obstetricians, Radiologists and Endocrinologists		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
Low iodine intakes are a concern in NZ, bread is being fortified with iodine to help address the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with pre-existing thyroid disease are more sensitive to increases in iodine intake. • The proposed level of fortification is low and considered unlikely to aggravate 	<p>Media releases</p> <p>Articles in medical publications</p>

<p>problem; this might have effects for some of their patients</p>	<p>existing thyroid disease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even with mandatory fortification, pregnant and breastfeeding women are likely to require daily iodine supplements to meet their recommended dietary intake. These women should consult their doctor or dietitian to discuss options for iodine supplementation. • If a suitable iodine supplement becomes available as a registered medicine, it may be appropriate to recommend this to pregnant or breastfeeding women. Individuals with pre-existing thyroid disease, and women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant, may seek your advice about the need for additional iodine. • There is little evidence that 'iodine allergy' exists. However some iodine-containing materials, especially povidone-iodine used as an antiseptic on the skin in medical situations, can cause irritation. This may be severe and in some cases cause an allergic reaction. • Iodine fortification is set at a conservative level that makes it unlikely to cause any adverse reactions. 	<p>Letters Website Articles in professional magazines/newsletters Presentations at conferences/workshops Article in Public Health Perspectives Prescriber Update</p>
<p>Government and internal stakeholders</p>		
<p>What they need to know</p>	<p>Key messages</p>	<p>Suitable channels</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments play a pivotal role in monitoring and enforcing the food regulatory system and in educating people about it. • Consumers and industry need accurate and timely information about the proposed standard and its implementation. • Monitoring will be essential when we implement this proposed new standard, and will provide a basis to gauge both the ongoing effectiveness and safety of mandatory iodine fortification in reducing iodine deficiency in New Zealand. • Need to monitor changes in animal and agricultural practices in New Zealand as the use of iodine-based feedstuffs or animal remedies may impact on the iodine content of the New Zealand food supply. 	<p>Ministerial updates</p>

For the media		
What they need to know	Key messages	Suitable channels
<p>The lack of iodine in our diet has negative effects on people's health and children's development. After rigorous investigation, the Governments of Australia and New Zealand have decided to fortify bread with iodine to increase iodine intakes in our populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and resources about mandatory fortification with iodine are available from the NZFSA and Ministry of Health websites. NZFSA and the Ministry of Health can provide spokespeople (internal and external) to give interviews and briefings about mandatory fortification with iodine. 	<p>Media releases Articles Spokespeople Website Background papers Presentation at Health Journalist's training day Briefing for Wellington-based health journalists</p>

5 Draft communication plan

Date	Stage / milestone	Audience	Communication activity	Responsible
	Standard is gazetted	Industry Health professionals	Trade media General media release Food Focus Food Connect Letter Website Meetings Conference, or other presentations	NZFSA working with FSANZ
	Standard is implemented Transition to full compliance begins Transition period ends <i>(timing of when each target groups should be reached needs further discussion)</i>	Industry	Trade media Food Focus Food Connect Workshops Conference, or other presentations	
		Consumers	Media release Food and lifestyle magazines Fact sheets	
		Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering becoming pregnant	Fact sheet through health professionals and childbirth educators Pregnancy magazines Food and lifestyle magazines Update existing pregnancy resources to include message Website information	
		Parents of young children	Parenting magazines and websites Fact sheet through health professionals and childbirth educators Website	
		People who do not want to consume iodine fortified foods People who do not eat bread	Articles in medical publications	

		Individuals with thyroid disorders and/or possible iodine sensitivities	Letters Fact sheet through health professionals Website Articles in professional magazines/newsletters Presentations at conferences/workshops Article in Public Health Perspectives Prescriber Update	
		Health professionals: GPs, Medical specialists Dietitians, Nurses, Midwives, Plunket Nurses	Fact sheet with covering letter Articles in health / professional magazines	
		Media	Media release Access to spokespeople	