

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3428/10
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to the Commission

Subject: Reduction of salt consumption to fight hypertension and cardiovascular illnesses

The European Society for Cardiology recommends that daily salt intake should not exceed 5 grammes. Epidemiological studies have shown that high salt consumption leads to higher blood pressure and hypertension. According to a recent study¹, reducing daily salt consumption by 3 grammes would reduce the number of cases of heart disease by up to 120 000, the number of strokes by up to 64 000, and the number of heart attacks by up to 100 000. The same source estimates that reducing daily salt consumption by 3 grammes would have the same effect on heart cases as a 50% reduction in smoking or a 5% reduction in the body mass of obese adults. Preventive measures of this kind could reduce the financial burden on medical services by more than EUR 18 billion.

A recent analysis of numerous studies from over the last 40 years² has confirmed the correlation between high salt consumption and a significant increase in the risk of heart attacks and heart disease.

According to studies carried out in the Member States, average individual salt consumption in the EU stands at over 10 grammes per day.

1. What actions will the Commission take to inform consumers of the risks associated with excessive salt consumption? Will the Commission consider submitting a proposal for a recommendation to the Member States with a view to harmonising daily levels of salt intake in the Union?
2. The Commission has undertaken to establish specific nutritional profiles which food products must follow if they are to benefit from nutritional and health mentions. What stage has this proposal reached, and what data will the Commission include regarding salt?

¹ Bibbins-Domingo K, Glenn CC, Coxson PG et al. Projected Effect of Dietary Salt Reductions on Future Cardiovascular Disease, *New Engl J Med.*, vol. 362:590-599, February, No 7.

² Pasquale Strazzullo, Lanfranco D'Elia, Ngianga-Bakwin Kandala and Francesco P Cappuccio. Salt intake, stroke, and cardiovascular disease: meta-analysis of prospective studies. *British Medical Journal*, 2009;339:b4567, doi: 10.1136/bmj.b4567.