

Contribution to IDD Elimination through food salt iodination in China

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1. BACKGROUND

Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) is a severe endemic disease, which causes abortion, stillbirth, congenital malformation, and more seriously, leads to intellectual damage to infant brain development.

425 million people in China live in endemic areas, it's big threat to people's health and development of the country. Former premier Li Peng made a commitment in the 1991 World Summit to achieve IDD Elimination in China by the year 2000.

Salt iodization is the major means for providing iodine to people in their daily life. The goal is to provide quality iodized salt to 90% of households and lower the incidence rate down to below 5%. The responsibility to launch a Universal Salt Iodization Project was given to the China Salt Industry.

2. FOOD SALT MONOPOLY IN CHINA

The Food Salt Monopoly (effective since May 1999) is a regulation set up to safeguard quality iodized salt supply from its production and distribution system through licensing mechanism. Together with the monitoring team, it has played a very important role in fighting against salt from illegal sources. An anti-forgery logo (using laser scan technology) has been applied in the retail iodized salt packages. People are made more and more aware the risk of IDD and voluntarily consuming iodized salt. The coverage of iodized salt has increased over the years. *The Monopoly policy* will continue to contribute to IDD elimination.

3. SUPPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The China IDD control Project is a multi-agency effort, not only undertaken by the government, but also by the China Salt Industry, Health sector etc., International organizations including World Bank, UNIDO, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO etc. have played very important role. UNICEF has been supporting quality monitoring system establishment, UNIDO, together with donor countries providing technical assistance programmes. The current programme is a technical cooperation project with Akzo Nobel Salt Company in the Netherlands.

4. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL SALT IODIZATION PROJECT

In this project, automatic iodization machines and different types of packaging machines have been purchased from abroad, there is also a portion of domestically fabricated retail machines based on technology transfer. This project helps to upgrade and modernize China salt industry, quality of production and packaging and distribution thus have been also improved, which contributes to the quality execution of National IDD Elimination Programme, also to modernization of China Salt Industry.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the 5 year long project, the fraction of adequately iodized salt reaches 95% of the total in 1999 and the coverage is 96%. According to a National Survey, the health effect achieved is remarkable.

IDD Control is a long lasting social campaign, we shall work our best for sustaining the fruit of this project and continue to contribute to the goal of global IDD elimination.