

Salt content in ready to eat soups in Portugal Comparison between 2018 and 2019

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Introduction

High salt intake is a worldwide public health concern. Its awareness is increasing in European Union. The National Food and Physical Activity Survey, 2015-2016 (IAN-AF), shows that the Portuguese population salt consumption averages 7.4 g of salt per day. Therefore, approximately 3.7 million women (63.2%) and 4.4 million men (88.9%) have a sodium intake above the tolerable level (2300 mg / day).¹

To accomplish the objective of promoting public health in Portugal, the goal of reaching individual intake of 5 g of salt / day by 2020 was set by the Integrated Strategy for Healthy Eating Promotion (EIPAS), applicable since 2018. In order to achieve this salt intake EIPAS recommended a maximum salt content of 0.3 g / 100 g for general food products and a maximum of 0.2 g / 100 g for main courses and soups.²

Objectives

To verify the evolution of salt content of ready to eat soups, on Portuguese market between 2018 and 2019, through labelling information and its compliance with EIPAS goal of 0.2 g of salt / 100 g.

Methods

The information on the labelling of ready to eat soups, available on Portuguese market, independently of production country, was gathered and analysed through the nutritional declaration available at online stores of supermarket chains. In 2018 only data on salt content was collected. In 2019 the collection included salt, energy, total fat and saturated fatty acids.

Results

86 soups were considered in total, 40 from 2018 and 46 from 2019. Salt content ranged from 0.33 to 1.0 g / 100 g in 2018 and from 0.29 to 1.2 g / 100 g in 2019. The average salt content was 0.65 and 0.60 g / 100 g in 2018 and 2019, respectively (Fig. 1).

For the data collected on soups in 2019 the energy values ranged from 16 to 233 kcal / 100 g, with an average of 47.0 kcal / 100 g (Fig. 2). It was observed that the three soups with the highest salt content were also the ones with higher energy.

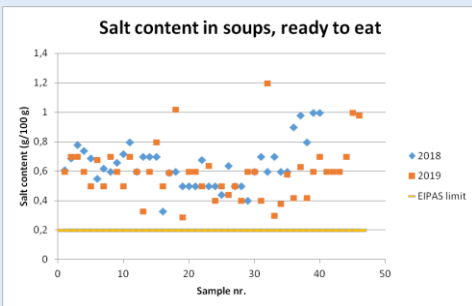


Fig. 1 – Salt content in soups, ready to eat

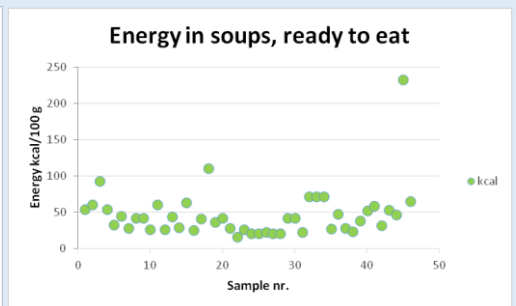


Fig. 2 – Energy in soups, ready to eat

Conclusions

All soups presented a salt content above EIPAS recommendation of 0.2 g / 100 g, in both years. Though the average salt content decreased slightly, further reduction by food industry is needed to comply with the EIPAS recommendations.

Visual confirmation of in-store product labelling would be a future improvement to overcome the possibility of outdated online information. This data collection should be repeated over the following years to identify potential trends on salt content evolution, in the long term.

Energy is not addressed by EIPAS, however it seems to be useful collect and analyse this data.

References

- [1]- National Food and Physical Activity Survey, IAN-AF 2015-2016 | Results report
- [2]- Diário da República (Portuguese Official Journal, 2nd serie, nr. 249, office nr. 11418/2017, the 29th December 2017).