Combating iodine deficiency in the Philippines through advocacy and partnership with the salt industry

“Iwas Goiter ni Mommy, Lusog-Isip ni Baby”

“Prevent goiter for Mommy, enhance brain development for Baby.”

Advocacy for increasing iodine intakes in the Philippines

The Philippines has regulations calling for 20-40 µg iodine/g of salt (20-40 ppm); thus if an individual eats 5 g of salt iodized at 30 ppm, he or she gets 150 µg iodine from this source alone. Iodine deficiency is best measured through urinary iodine concentrations (UIC) in representative sampling of clusters of population groups. A median UIC between 100 – 200 µg/L is ideal for school children. However, pregnant women should have higher UIC levels (150 – 249 µg/L). According to the 2008 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) in the Philippines, the iodine status of children 6 – 12 years is optimal as indicated by the median UIC of 132 µg/L. However, the iodine status of pregnant and lactating women is lower than desired. NNS data show that pregnant women have only a median UIC of 105 µg/L while lactating women have median value of 81 µg/L. Thus, their iodine status is of public health concern, considering that their UICs in the 2003 NNS were higher, at 142 µg/L and 111 µg/L, respectively. Thus, iodine nutrition may be decreasing among women. They need to be educated more vigorously on the regular use of iodized salt in their cooking and at the table, as well as having iodine-rich food for their diet.
In 2011, the Philippines will celebrate for the 5th year running Goiter Awareness Week (January 23-28, 2011). The poster (below) text in Filipino is translated as „Prevent goiter for Mommy, Enhance brain development for Baby.“ This poster is used to celebrate this week, and the subtext encourages the eating of seafoods and the use of iodized salt. The different logos of the national coalition making up the Philippine Thyroid Council are shown at the bottom.

**Philippine salt traders agree to improve salt quality under iodization law**

**Sarwell Q. Meniano** Business World, The Philippines

**TACLOBAN CITY** November 02, 2010. Salt traders here have agreed to improve product quality in compliance with the salt iodization law. The traders met with the local Bantay Asin Task Force last month to forge a partnership and ensure that the quality of iodized salt marketed in the region meets provisions of Republic Act 8172, or Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide (ASIN). Charles Uykim, Jr., owner of Coconmart with a warehouse in Marabaras district in this city, has called on the government to start monitoring activities at the source to upgrade the quality of iodine content.

„We just receive salt shipments here. Checking should be done at the production site,” he added.

Edward P. Otico, an associate of the international organization Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), said his group will assist the Health department in coming up with a quality control system that will be followed by all salt producers nationwide. GAIN will send an iodine checker this month to the Tacloban port area.

„The small and portable instrument provides reliable performance,” Mr. Otico said.

The task force, composed of various government agencies in Region 8, called for a meeting with traders after survey results showed low intake of iodine among target age groups. The latest National Nutrition Survey by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute showed that 97.2% of households in Eastern Visayas have been using iodized salt. However, the same study revealed that median urinary iodine excretion of children in Region 8 is 83 (µg/L), in lactating mothers is 58 µg/L, and in pregnant women is 83 µg/L. These figures are way below the 100-150 µg/L minimum iodine excretion using the same measurement.

„Salt traders must understand that distributing iodized salt is their social responsibility. Only 25% of the households in the country have adequately been using iodized salt. Over 67 million Filipinos and 1.67 million newborns are unprotected,” Mr. Otico said.

Under the law, salt producers/manufacturers shall register with the Food and Drug Administration, which shall maintain an updated registry of salt producers/manufacturers and shall monitor compliance with the salt iodization program.