Only 60% of household salt in Albania is adequately iodized and coverage is lower in poor rural areas

This recent study set out to determine the iodine concentration in household salt, the coverage of adequately iodized salt, the use of non-iodized salt, and the usefulness of salt as a carrier of iodine in Albania. A second goal was to relate the findings to socio-economic status in Albania.

Albania is a country with limited environmental resources of iodine: its levels are very low in both foods and drinking water. For many years, IDD has been recognized as a serious public health problem (1). As part of a national survey, 1027 household salt samples were collected from the households of children aged 6 to 13 years and analyzed at the Food Chemistry Laboratory of the Institute of Public Health in Tirana; 287 samples were from urban and 540 from rural areas. The iodine content of the samples was measured using a standard iodometric titration method.

The national median iodine concentration in household salt was 22.3 ppm in urban areas and 17.4 ppm in rural areas. Both of these medians indicate adequately iodized salt (≥15 ppm of iodine). However, the highest median was recorded in the district of Saranda (31.9 ppm) and the lowest in the district of Kruja (5.7 ppm), which demonstrates considerable variation. The analysis also showed that only 60.4% of the salt samples were adequately iodized.

Just under a third of the population was found to be using non-iodized salt purchased directly from the producers. People at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum were more likely to use agricultural salt, which means they may be more likely to suffer the health and socio-economic consequences of using poorly iodized salt.

References


Many children in rural areas of Albania consume poorly iodized salt