A review of dietary sources of iodine intake, including salt from different sources and natural sources of iodine was undertaken to inform the development of iodization standards. The review included published and unpublished literature and reports, data and/or information from national salt iodization programmes.

There is a global trend of increasing contribution of salt intake through processed foods; in many countries this salt is not iodized. Except for marine food, most natural food sources are low in iodine. Additional dietary iodine via iodized livestock salt and iodine in drinking water contribute relatively little towards iodine intake of large populations. Natural sources of iodine in the diet as well as the iodine contribution via livestock salt are less critical in determining national standards, however, a key consideration is the source of dietary salt. To reflect the changing consumption patterns, iodine standards should be applicable to the total dietary salt supply.

METHODS

• A desk review of published and unpublished literature and reports, data and/or information from national iodine deficiency elimination/salt iodization programmes to gather both knowledge and programme experience.

• The review included:
  - legislation and policies regarding salt iodization;
  - information regarding main sources of iodine intake in the diet including iodized table salt;
  - iodized salt in processed foods and iodine from other dietary sources.

RESULTS

• Information of current salt iodization legislation and standards was obtained for 55 countries.

• Iodization legislation and standards vary greatly, many do not specify iodized salt for processed foods and many have high iodization standards. (See Table 1 for selected examples.)

• There is a global trend of increasing contribution of salt intake through processed foods, however, in many countries the salt used in processed foods is not iodized.

• Except for marine food (e.g. sea fish, seaweed), most natural food sources are low in iodine. (Figure 1)

• In industrialized countries without mandatory USI, the most significant food groups contributing to iodine intake are dairy and cereal products (Figure 1), however, there is a large variation in iodine content within and between foods due to natural variations.

• Little information exists regarding the use of iodized livestock salt, particularly in developing countries; information available suggests additional dietary iodine via iodized livestock salt is not significant.

• Generally, iodine content in drinking water is low and contributes relatively little towards iodine intake of large populations.

CONCLUSIONS

Natural sources of iodine in the diet as well as the iodine contribution via livestock salt are less critical in determining national iodization standards.

The source of dietary salt is a key consideration for setting iodization standards to achieve optimal iodine intake in the population in the context of salt iodization strategies.

To reflect the changing consumption patterns, iodization standards should be applicable to the total dietary salt supply so as to include table salt as well as salt used in processed foods.

The conclusions are limited by the lack of data from some countries regarding national legislation and limited information regarding national food consumption.

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