Report from the 2018 World Salt Symposium

The 2018 World Salt Symposium (WSS) was held in Park City, Utah, USA on June 19–21, bringing together salt producers, researchers, journalists, business leaders and academics from more than 30 countries. The WSS is the most comprehensive meeting on the subject of salt. Since 1962, the WSS has been convened with the purpose of capturing new developments from salt industry leaders and scientists. Over that time the technology for producing salt and the understanding of its uses have developed dramatically. Sessions were held on a wide variety of topics across health, environment, and production, including mining and geology, production technology, salt extraction, salt and winter maintenance, salt intake, salt and cardiovascular health, and salt and iodine.

The Iodine Global Network in partnership with Kiwanis International hosted technical sessions on iodine nutrition. Speakers from the salt industry included Morton Salt, along with interagency partners including GAIN, UNICEF, Nutrition International, among others. It was an opportunity to discuss with industry partners the importance of iodine, the global progress of salt iodization programs, and the tremendous contribution made by the salt industry. A summary of iodine-related discussions and presentations follows.

Global experience with USI and its achievements toward IDD elimination
Progress toward the global elimination of iodine deficiency disorders is an immense success story of public-private interface. Executive Director for Kiwanis International and Kiwanis Children’s Fund, and Board Member of the Iodine Global Network, Stan D. Soderstrom shared the global success story of Universal Salt Iodization, now reaching 86% of the population in low and middle income countries and considered one of the most successful public health achievements in the past fifty years. IGN Executive Director Jonathan Gorstein presented on the progress and achievements toward the goal of eliminating iodine deficiency at the global level.

Examples of successful public-private collaborations on USI
Delegates presented on national success stories from China, Pakistan, Mozambique, Tanzania, Cambodia, and India – among others. Yuxiang Tong of Jiangsu Province Salt Industry Group Co., Ltd., presented on Iodized Salt and IDD Prevention and Control in China, and on “snow-white Wu Salt —the emergence and influence of the circle of the Huai Salt Culture.” Noor A. Khan of Nutrition International, and Board Member of the Iodine Global Network, presented on “USI in Pakistan – A public health success story.” Luiz Caetano of Sal Cisne in Brazil, and IGN Board Member, presented on “public-private collaboration on USI: examples of recent success and some suggestions for the future.” Scott Koefod of Cargill Deicing Technology presented on “photochemical stabilization of fortified salt to treat lymphatic filariasis and iodine deficiency.”

Sustaining success through public private partnership
Whether working at the global, regional, or country level, salt industry experts conveyed that building relationships and associations is the first step to delivering population iodine nutrition through salt as a vehicle.

IGN and development partners used the platform to invite guidance from industry partners on how USI can be sustained. Heavy driving by the public sector has not been sustainable in the past. Salt producers are well positioned to guide how the NGO sector can advocate for policy changes and support programs to be effective in accordance with revenue and profits of the salt producers, so that programs are designed to be sustainable in the long term.

Delivering this public sector intervention costs a small additional amount: for potassium iodate (the salt fortificant) as well as for the pre-mix. While early programs were subsidized, the cost must be absorbed...
sustainably to support lasting optimal iodine nutrition. How much is channeled through consumers directly versus through the food industry to sustainably supply iodine to the population?

**Sodium reduction is complementary**
Importantly, colleagues in sodium reduction presented on salt intake and health, including the effect of salt on cardiovascular health and blood pressure. Jan Staessen, of the University of Leuven Belgium, presented on “reducing salt intake for prevention of cardiovascular disease—times are changing.”

It is such a critical time to communicate that the interventions of sodium reduction and iodized salt are complementary.

IGN and partners work with the World Health Organization as the authority on iodine nutrition for countries worldwide. Opportunities to synergize the message on salt iodization with salt reduction through WHO would support the promotion of iodine along with the reduction of salt intake. IGN has also advocated for FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission of international food safety standards to support the salt industry to iodize salt in a healthy, safe, and sustainable manner.

**Messaging & media**
It’s more important than ever that the safety, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness of USI is communicated well to stakeholders as well as the general public, in order to facilitate buy-in and to sustain the progress we’ve made. And in the branding of iodized salt, being careful of messaging and of synergizing our messaging with our salt partners.

For instance, does branding iodized salt as ‘smart salt’ risk promoting over-intake of salt?

**Use of iodized salt in processed foods and condiments is an opportunity**
The use of iodized salt in processed foods and condiments is not only an opportunity but a critical part of sustainable USI. Mandating and enforcing the use of iodized salt in processed products is an integral component of true Universal Salt Iodization. Robin Houston, IGN Senior Advisor, presented on “steps required to include processed foods in national USI programs.”

**Recent efforts toward salt industry consolidation to support USI**
Industry consolidation was discussed, both market driven and government led. In many countries, small, diverse salt producers pose a challenge to the delivery of consistently iodized, high-quality salt. Several countries, including Tanzania, have embarked on efforts to transform their salt industry to address this barrier.

**Using salt as a fortification vehicle for other micronutrients**
Because of the immense success of salt iodization, salt is now being explored as a fortification vehicle to address anemia. Noor Khan, of Nutrition International, presented on “recent efforts towards consolidation of the salt industry to support USI.” IGN Executive Director Jonathan Gorstein presented on IGN’s current effort to convene partners in India, where double-fortified salt (DFS) – containing iodine and iron – is now being delivered to 66 million beneficiaries through the public distribution system. IGN and partners in India are exploring the conditions which need to be in place to ensure its successful deployment.

**Critical issues on the implementation of iodized salt production**
GAIN led the conversation regarding regulatory monitoring and potassium iodate supply. Katia Dos Santos Dias presented on “critical issues in the implementation of iodized salt production—regulatory monitoring and KIO3 supply.” Katia presented various enablers to supply and regulatory monitoring, including information systems and the use of data.

IGN shared information about a new data resource the Global Fortification Data Exchange, a partnership between IGN, the Food Fortification Initiative, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, and the Micronutrient Forum, that has significant application for food fortification program implementation.

**Summary**
The World Salt Symposium 2018 was a reminder of the importance of building and strengthening partnerships with industry to sustain the global success of USI. In order to continue to deliver optimal iodine nutrition through food systems, it will be critical to strengthen intersectional partnerships, support enabling environments, and innovate USI programs to meet challenges at the global, regional, and country levels. IGN continues to provide a platform for all partners to participate in the global achievement of eliminating iodine deficiency.