Despite conflict, nearly 2/3rds of households in Syria have adequately iodized salt


Many Syrian households are still using iodized salt despite years of conflict

Background
This report presents the findings of the 2019 SMART Survey conducted in 13 Governorates out of 14 Governorates in Syria between March and April 2019. Idleb Governorate was inaccessible due to insecurity and hence not included in the survey. The last nationwide SMART Survey in Syria was conducted in March 2016 covering only 11 Governorates. Obtaining an up to date representative nutritional status data was one of the major gaps faced by the nutrition actors for designing appropriate nutrition response since the conflict started in Syria. The main objective of the 2019 SMART Survey was to assess the current nutritional status of children 0-59 months old and women of reproductive age (15-49 years old) at governorate and national levels.

In Syria, salt iodization is the public health measure through which iodine is provided. There is legislation for mandatory salt iodization for salt producers. However, because of the conflict, there has been challenges on the importation of potassium iodate used in salt iodation impacting on progress that had been in the past.

Therefore, one of the objectives of the SMART survey was to estimate the coverage of household iodized salt at the national level. A representative sample of 8,140 households across 13 governorates/domains participated in the survey.
**Results**

*Figure 1* shows that 63% of the salt used by households in the study population is sufficiently iodized. Packing was also checked while testing the salt for iodization. Data shows that only 1% of the salt in packages labelled as iodized was not actually iodized.

*Figure 2* shows that 77% of the salt used by households in the study population is locally produced. Importation of potassium iodate has been a challenge to facilitate salt iodation in the country.

*Figure 3* shows salt iodization by governate in Syria. The Damascus governorate has highest rate of iodized salt at 87.8%. The lowest rate of iodized salt was noted in Ar-Raqqa with only 22.4%, followed by Al Hassakeh and Deir Zour with 24.2% and 30.4% respectively.

**Conclusions**

Overall, the data shows an increase the rate of salt iodation from 38.7% in the 2016 SMART survey to a current level of 63%. It is noted that prior to the survey, the national government managed to distribute limited quantities of potassium iodate to local salt producers and this possibly contributed to the increase noted. In addition, there is a possibility that some companies could be importing iodated salt and repacking locally.