

A Philippine salt producer embraces iodized salt as its corporate social responsibility

Theresa S. Samaniego Philippine Daily Inquirer, May 18th, 2012

The Philippine government since the 1990s has pushed iodized salt as the simplest yet most potent solution to iodine deficiency, to the point of enacting a law mandating that all salt produced and sold in the market should be iodized.

A Philippine salt producer, Salinas Corp., according to its business development manager Glenn John Khonghun, was among those companies that participated in the salt iodization program in 1993, during which the advocacy was conducted on a national scale.

At that time, the Department of Health, with the support of Salinas Corp. and several other concerned groups and stakeholders, was able to inform and educate mothers in hospitals, health centers and clinics on the benefits of using iodized salt. Salinas then took upon itself the cause of finding ways to better implement the iodized salt program as part of its corporate social responsibility activities.

In a recent interview, Khonghun remembered: “The challenge then was how to institutionalize a social change, a basic in any social marketing effort... Through the government leadership, local government units who embraced the advocacy to use iodized salt were given incentives and recognition, which eventually helped propel the adoption of the campaign.”

The hype of the '90s for iodized salt may have since died down. But the fact remains that it continues to be a good source of iodine, an essential micronutrient needed by the body for the thyroid gland to properly function and produce enough hormones.



This vintage postcard from Salinas, The Philippines, shows the snow-white mountainside salt terraces.

It also remains a fact that iodine deficiency continues to be alarmingly more prevalent in pregnant and lactating women. According to Khonghun: “Children who were born of mothers with iodine deficiency are most affected. In cases where iodine was absent early in life, the disorder can be irreversible.”

IDD is the single most common cause of preventable mental retardation and brain damage in the world. This is why Salinas Corp. has continued its partnership with the DOH – a relationship that will mark the 20th year by 2013.

“We renewed our commitment to the health programs of the DOH in 2005, upon the declaration of PP 958 [Decade of Healthy Lifestyle], which serves as an expansion of the health campaign for iodized salt,” Khonghun said. “This is our way of augmenting the government’s resources, by doing our part and giving back to society”.