

Food Reformulation Programme



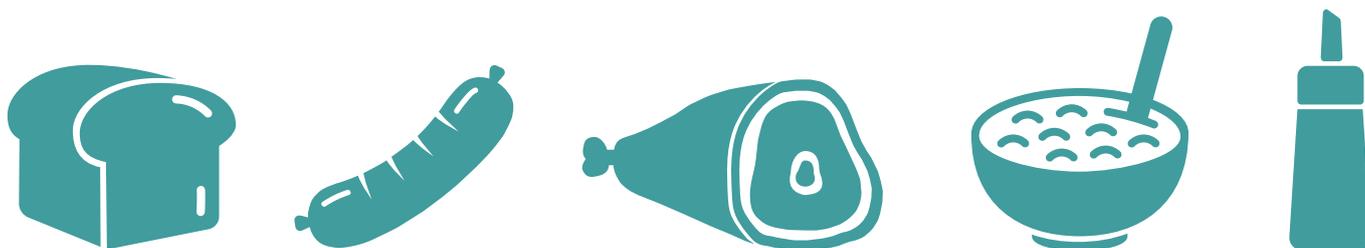
Our work with food companies is supporting them to reduce salt and sugar levels in supermarket foods throughout New Zealand.

Background

New Zealanders generally eat a lot more sodium (salt) and sugar than is recommended.

Around **75%** of the sodium we eat comes from processed foods

Foods like bread, processed meats (e.g. sausages, bacon and ham), breakfast cereals, sauces and savoury snacks are all significant sources.



For over a decade, the Heart Foundation has been working with food companies to lower sodium levels in these products.

“Supermarket processed foods are a key part of what New Zealanders eat. This emphasises the important role that food companies and reformulation can have in reducing salt intake.”

- Dave Monro, Chief Advisor Food and Nutrition

In consultation with food companies, we set voluntary sodium and sugar targets for key food categories. The Heart Foundation works with companies representing over 80% of the market share in each food category and this ensures main brands and leading selling foods are prioritised. The targets are specific to each food category, reflecting the technical role that salt and sugar play in different food products.

Food companies are encouraged to steadily reduce levels in a stepwise fashion to minimise noticeable changes for consumers. The targets are used when reformulating existing products and also when developing new products.

Currently New Zealanders eat more than double the recommended salt intake.

Around **9** grams of salt a day



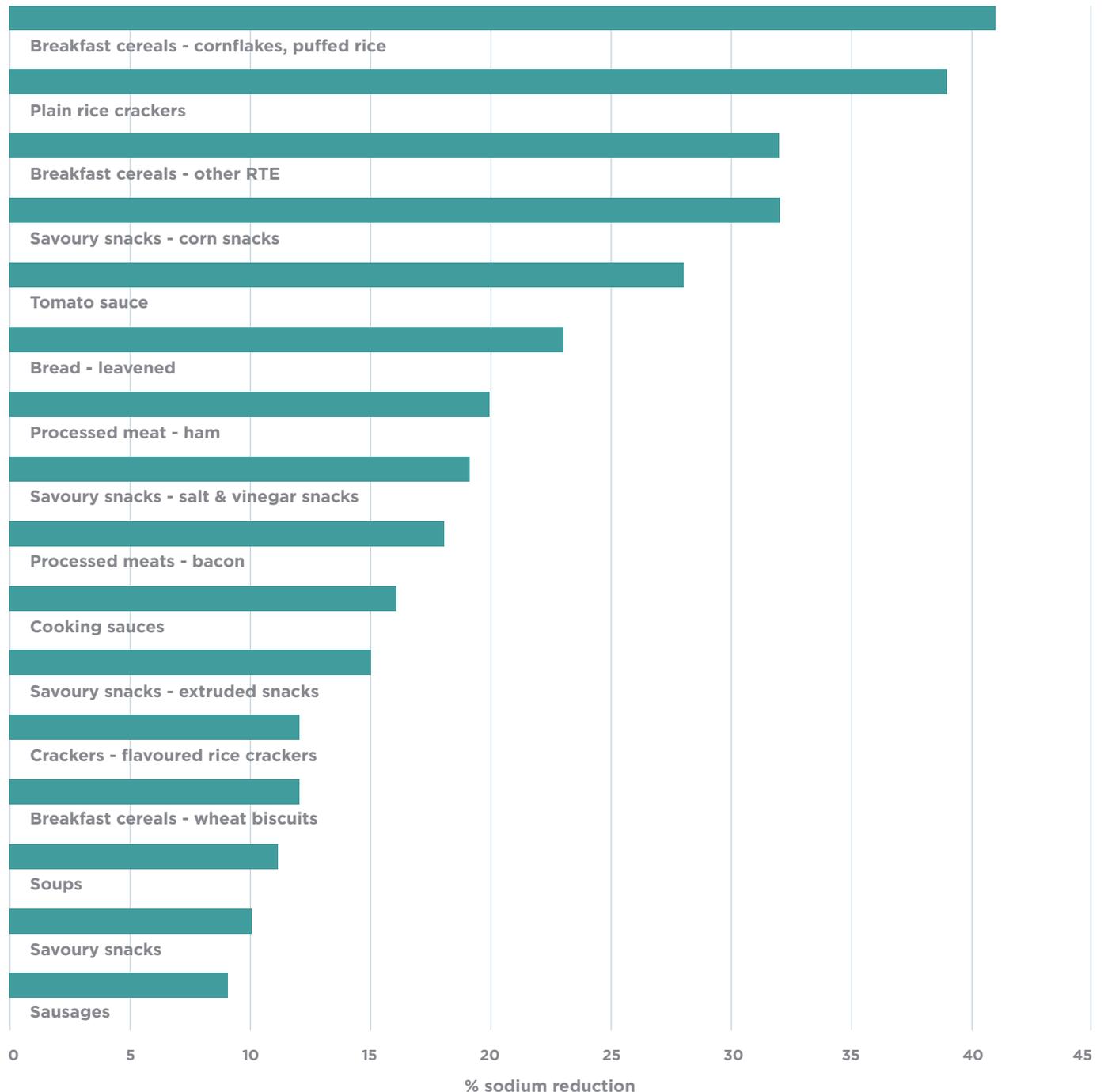
High salt intakes have strong links with high blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for heart disease.

Our achievements so far

In total, 49 voluntary targets have been set across 39 food categories. The focus of the programme has largely been on salt reduction, however, in 2016 the work was expanded to include sugar reduction targets for categories like breakfast cereals, sauces and yoghurt.

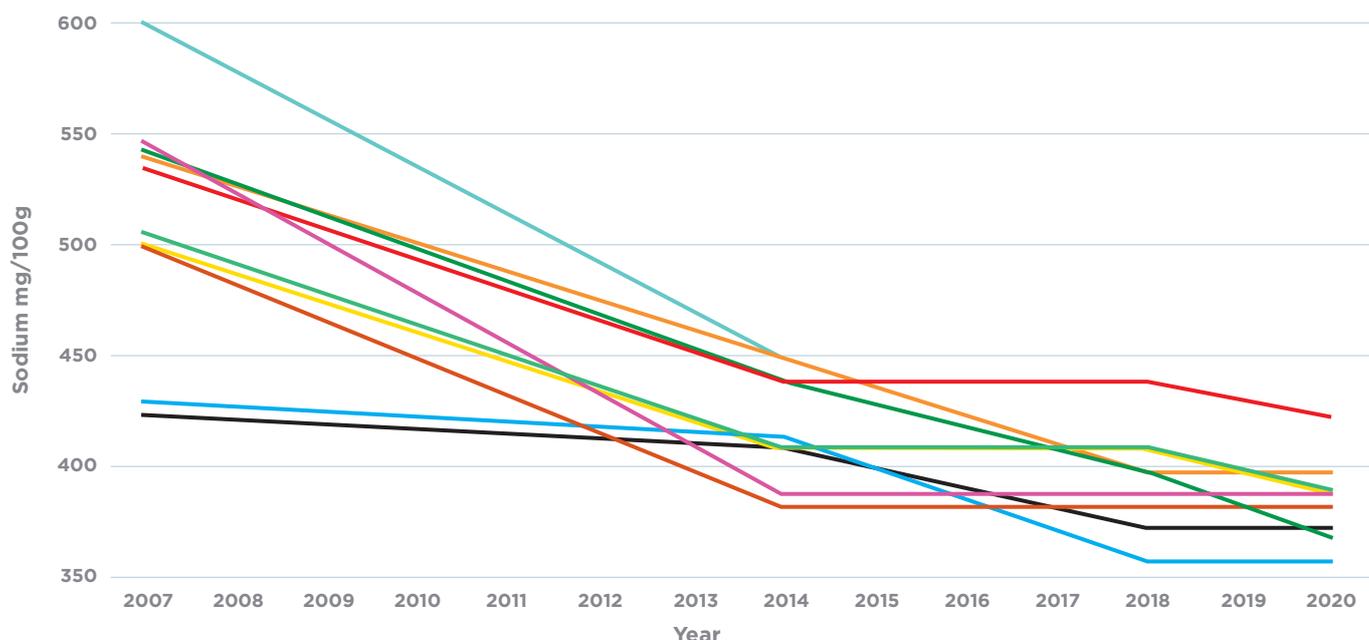
There has been great progress with sodium reductions across a wide range of food categories. For example, a 41% reduction in certain types of breakfast cereals, over a 30% sodium reduction across the savoury snacks and cracker categories and a 20% sodium reduction in the ham category. It is estimated that over 320 tonnes of salt have been removed from targeted products per annum.

Sodium reduction in key food categories



In addition to improvements across categories, we aim for the top-selling products to meet the sodium reduction targets. For example, the 10 top-selling breads have lowered their sodium content by an average of 27% and the eight top-selling cornflakes/puffed rice breakfast cereals have reduced sodium by 21%.

Sodium reduction in top selling breads 2007 to 2020



New sugar targets are also being implemented and early progress shows sugar reductions of 16-40% in major brands of breakfast cereals, yoghurts, flavoured milk, and cereal bars.

“The strong engagement from food companies has meant the targets have been revised over time. This encourages a process of ongoing sodium and sugar reduction in products over many years.”

- Dave Monro, Chief Advisor Food and Nutrition

Looking to the future

This programme can continue to play a significant role in supporting food companies to undertake food reformulation and reduce sodium and sugar in foods.

It has been estimated that reducing average sodium intake by 20% would save 930 lives in New Zealand each year (Goodall et al 2008).

Food reformulation remains a critical tool for food companies to support health. The reformulation of leading selling brands gradually over time means many New Zealanders are getting the benefit of less salt and sugar in the foods they eat.

Visit heartfoundation.org.nz/reformulation-targets to find out more about the sugar and salt targets and our work with food companies.

heartfoundation.org.nz

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