



July 29, 2010

Canadian Meat Council supports Canada's sodium reduction strategy

OTTAWA, Ont., - Canada's national trade association for federally inspected meat packers and processors supports Canada's strategy for reducing Canadians' daily intake of sodium and says it's the right approach to tackling a global health issue.

The Canadian Meat Council (CMC) supports the multi-staged approach of the Multi-Stakeholder Working Group on Sodium Reduction to reduce Canadians' sodium consumption. The three prongs, outlined in the Working Group's report, *Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada* released today, are: research, education, and a structured voluntary reduction of sodium levels in processed food products and foods sold in food service. The report also recommends a fourth prong to the strategy, which is to develop a plan to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategy.

Jim Laws, Executive Director of the Canadian Meat Council, says meat industry members understand the importance of reducing the amount of sodium in Canadians' diets. "Our members are committed to providing Canadians with sodium-reduced options – and have been for several years - evidenced by the many sodium reduced processed meat products already available to consumers in grocery stores."

Laws says that all prongs of the Canadian strategy are important and must work in tandem if the strategy is to be successful. A well-funded consumer education program must be developed to explain the health benefits of reducing sodium intake and the changes to the food supply resulting from voluntary sodium reduction. Similarly, there is a need for continued research into the physiological basis of sodium reduction and the development of salt 'replacers' with the full range of sodium chloride functionality. In addition to improving taste, sodium is used as a preservative; when it binds with water it hinders the growth of micro-organisms, therefore ensuring food safety.

The Canadian Meat Council also applauds the Working Group recommendation for Health Canada to improve the current nutrition labeling system to facilitate better consumer understanding and use, particularly as it relates to sodium. More specifically, the Working Group recommends that the Food and Drug regulations be amended to ensure that the serving sizes used in the Nutrition Facts table be as uniform as possible to facilitate the comparison of sodium levels in similar foods.

“Critical to the success of this new voluntary sodium reduction strategy is consumer acceptance.” says Laws. “Consumers need to be aware of why the changes are occurring and they need to accept the changes in the products for the strategy to be successful.”

The Canadian Meat Council is Canada's national trade association for the federally inspected meat packers and processors. As a key component of Canada's agriculture sector, the meat industry is the largest sector of Canada's food processing industry, representing 10% of Canada's agri-food exports and employing more than 67,000 Canadians. It is also one of Canada's leading manufacturing sectors with annual sales of over \$21.4 billion.

Contact:

Alissa Clark

Communications Manager

Office: (613) 729-3911 ext. 31

Cell: (613) 218-1891

Alissa@cmc-cvc.com