

# Stealth Sodium Reduction Might Go Public



For food producers, transparency in regards to nutrition focused reformulations could potentially grow sales compared to stealth reformulations of the recent past.

In the past, the food industry felt that proclaiming a product's sugar, fat or sodium reduction might lead to lower sales<sup>1</sup>. The concern was that consumers may perceive the food's taste profile as compromised and be distracted from the potential nutrition benefits<sup>2</sup>.

So as a result, food producers reduced sugar, fat and sodium by stealth, that is, without announcing product changes<sup>3</sup>. Manufacturers may have hoped that since the main packaging remained the same, that by extension, consumers' taste perception would also remain the same; and just in case consumers chose to look at the nutrition facts panel, the products might fare well from a nutrition perspective when compared to competitor products.

On May 5, 2016, Nestlé commended the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) draft guidance to the food industry regarding voluntarily reducing sodium, and declared it would continue its endeavors to reduce sodium<sup>4</sup>.

Immediately following the announcement, CivicScience, an online polling and market research company based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, conducted a survey of nearly 2,000 U.S. consumers to get their reactions to Nestlé's announcement and learn if they felt more or less likely to buy their products<sup>5</sup>. Fifty-three percent of respondents reported "I will buy Nestlé products just the same as before."<sup>6</sup>

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1 Crawford, Elizabeth. "'Stealth health' could be strategy of the past as consumers embrace healthy reformulations." 7 Jun 2016. William Reed Business Media Ltd. Accessed on 17 Jan 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Suppliers2/Stealth-health-could-be-strategy-of-past-as-consumers-embrace-health>

2 Crawford, Elizabeth.

3 Crawford, Elizabeth.

4 Nestlé. "Nestlé Announces Support for Lower Sodium Targets." 5 May 2016. Accessed on 5 Jan 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.Nestléusa.com/media/pressreleases/Nestlé-supports-lower-sodium-targets>

5 Albert, Laura. "Nestlé Makes Bold Move." CivicScience, Inc. Accessed on 5 Jan 2017. Retrieved from <https://civicscience.com/Nestlé-makes-bold-move/>

6 Albert, Laura.

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Four percent said they would be “less likely” and 15 percent said they would be “more likely” to purchase Nestlé products<sup>7</sup>. These results may indicate that publicly reducing sodium may even improve sales.

CivicScience reports, “We also asked consumers if they are more willing to trust Nestlé after making this move. After asking over 1,000 U.S. adults, we found that of those who have heard about the announcement, 23% of consumers answered ‘I am more likely to trust Nestlé,’ while only 5% said ‘I am more likely to distrust Nestlé.’”<sup>8</sup> It appears some consumers appreciate the fact that the company is voluntarily reducing product sodium levels.

More consumers are looking for nutritious options<sup>9</sup> and Nestlé’s effort provides opportunities for consumers to reduce sodium consumption. Will other food companies follow suit and voluntarily reduce sodium? Or will it require the FDA to make their currently voluntary sodium reduction guidelines into mandatory guidelines in order to generate changes?

Food producers looking for a place to start when aiming to reduce sodium content in their products may first want to consider optimizing the particular type of salt used in order to efficiently maximize salty taste. Alberger® brand flake salt crystals have large surface area and low bulk density to provide superior adherence, blendability and solubility compared to regular granulated salt. The rapid solubility of Alberger salt also provides a flavor burst when used in topical applications.

Potassium chloride is a go-to replacement for salt in the food industry. Cargill’s Premier™ Potassium Chloride is a granular, food grade, odorless, white crystalline product with a typical saline-like taste. Premier™ potassium chloride was developed to meet the needs of food manufacturers for replacement of sodium chloride or potassium enrichment in a wide range of food processing applications. Cargill also offers FlakeSelect® Potassium Chloride products with particles that are low in bulk density, highly soluble, and provide superior adherence for topical applications as compared to granulated products.

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<sup>7</sup> Albert, Laura.

<sup>8</sup> Albert, Laura.

<sup>9</sup> Crawford, Elizabeth.