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MSG can help in salt reduction with affective taste: Dr Miro Smirga of Ajinomoto

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By **Sanjiv Das** | February 27, 2026



Sugar and salt

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Gradual salt and sugar reduction is a national priority in view of rising non-communicable diseases. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is supporting the drive of salt and sugar reduction, front-of-pack labelling and industry led reformulation.

With these objectives, CSIR-Central Food Technological Research Institute (CSIR–CFTRI), Mysuru, organised an International Workshop on "Sensory Strategies for Sodium Reduction in Indian Traditional Foods" at its premises. Speakers participating in the workshop deliberated on various aspects related to salt reduction. The speaker emphasised on one important point of maintaining flavour and palatability while making low-sodium foods. Both are important from the consumers' point of view for the acceptability of sodium reduction.

Inaugurating the workshop, Dr Sridevi Annapurna Singh, former Director CSIR-CFTRI, warned that India is leader in many of the diseases caused by wrong eating habits and hence the topic of the workshop is very relevant. When WHO recommended not more than 5gm of salt consumption per day, we are consuming double of that. No country has been able to achieve UN's set goal of 30 per cent reduction in salt consumption. There was huge scope for salt reduction in India but it should be done without giving taste and sensory quality.

"The quality of food in terms of shelf life and health attributes should not be compromised," said Dr Giridhar Parvatam, Director, CSIR-CFTRI. He presided over the function. He also emphasised on the creation of awareness to consumers on the monosodium glutamate (MSG) in processing levels and how MSG is produced industrially.

Pawan Agarwal, CEO, Food Future Foundation, said, "There were two major shifts observed in food habits. First is huge growth of traditional processed foods and second is several of them are with too much sugar and salt." "Can we ensure that processed foods available on shelf are healthy," he asked.

The workshop brought together scientists, sensory experts, policymakers and industry representatives to address excessive sodium consumption through culturally appropriate, sensory-driven reformulation strategies for Indian traditional foods.

Dr Miro Smirga, Executive Officer, Ajinomoto Co, said, “70 to 75 per cent of salt intake comes from processed foods and food services. He said “there were three main hurdles in salt reduction. They are sensory acceptance, microbial safety and processing.” Later he made a presentation on regulatory standards and safety assessment of monosodium glutamate (MSG), a flavour enhancer commonly added to processed foods, soups etc. to intensify the savoury and taste. “It can help in salt reduction with affective taste,” he said.

A CSIR–CFTRI study presented during the workshop demonstrated that use of MSG enabled 22–35 per cent sodium reduction across Indian food formulations while maintaining sensory acceptability and taste balance. The findings support umami-based, gradual reformulation without compromising traditional flavour profiles.

Experts also clarified that MSG contains approximately one-third the sodium of common salt and can be safely used within regulatory limits as a flavour enhancer. Scientific evidence indicates that widely held misconceptions regarding adverse health effects are not supported when MSG is consumed in normal dietary amounts.

Discussions focussed on sensory modulation, cross-modal enhancement, consumer salt perception, and reformulation of foods such as sambar, chutneys, pickles, curries, and snacks. Participants emphasised evidence-based sodium reduction supported by sensory validation.

Speakers in different sessions included Dr Jamuna Prakash, former professor, University of Mysore; Dr Suneeta Chandorkar, Asst Professor, MS University Vadodara; Milind Kokje, Chief Editor, NUFFOODS Spectrum; Dr Prasanna Vasu, Senior Principal Scientist, CFTRI; Sushila Sarangdhar, consultant dietician; Monica Talukdar, Clinical Nutritionist; Erom Rao, Professor, Delhi University, Dr Sundaravalli, Dean, Mount Carmel College, and Dr Dinesh Kumar, Associate Professor, Central University of Haryana. Dr Ana San Gabriel, Associate GM, Ajinomoto Co Inc, delivered keynote address on Sensory mechanism and umami-driven sodium reduction strategies.

The workshop concluded with a commitment to strengthen research–industry–policy collaboration, develop standardised sensory validation frameworks for Indian cuisines, and support national NCD prevention initiatives.

Read online: https://nuffoodsspectrum.in/news/32/23187/msg-can-help-in-salt-reduction-with-affective-taste-dr-miro-smirga-of-ajinomoto.html

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