

The South African Food Data System (SAFOODS) Salt Update: The Role of Food Manufacturers

Averalda Van Graan^{1,2}, Joelaine Chetty¹, Malory Jumat¹

¹Biostatistics Research Unit, SAFOODS Division, SAMRC, Parow, South Africa. ²Division of Human Nutrition, Department of Global Health, Stellenbosch University, Bellville, South Africa

Abstract

SAFOODS is the custodian of the national food composition database, and its core function involves maintaining and updating the National food composition database which currently comprise a master database of 1857 food items and 175 food components. This reference database informs various related products and tools which are used by a diverse number of users, including academic and research institutions, practicing nutrition health care practitioners, laboratories as well as members from the food industry.

R214 was promulgated aiming to reduce salt intake as excessive consumption of sodium contributes to the burden of related diseases which is of a public health concern. These sets of regulations have thus as a consequence rendered the affected food classes of the 2019 food composition database obsolete warranting an extensive update of related data across various food groups within the database.

Due to the substantial number of food classes and food items affected by the regulation, SAFOODS focused to employ secondary analytical data sourcing as the focus for data generation for this update. Food manufacturers were systematically identified and contacted according to the food classes and related food items within the database affected by the regulation.

Certificates of analyses were obtained from six food manufacturers within the food industry which informed thirteen food classes. Additional data were sourced from online manufacturer websites for the food classes for data that were not directly obtained. Analytical data provided, and online data sourced were compiled which was followed by an intensive data quality assurance process, including the regulated threshold sodium values. Recipe calculations were applied to selected food items to obtain nutrient values for cooked food items. Pre-final data not meeting threshold international food compilation quality values were omitted and were thus not included in the database.

The resultant 2023 food composition database update comprised 13 food classifications, 1857 food items, 141 new additions, with cereals and soups encompassing the largest contribution of 56% and 21% respectively, while infant foods contributed 2%. The updated database (V.2023) was published via the SAFOODS Foodfinder web-based dietary analyses program for use by license holders.

Food manufacturers made a substantive contribution to the current food composition database update highlighting the important role of private-public partnerships moreover paving the way for strengthening future collaborations.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY: AVERALDA VAN GRAAN

Averalda van Graan is currently employed at the South African Medical Research Council in the capacity as the Research Manager of the South African Food Data System, a position she held since 2016. She in addition holds an Extra ordinary appointment at the University of Stellenbosch. Averalda has joined the SAMRC after 13 years in Academia, with appointments at the North West University and Western Cape University as Academic program manager, Program leader and Senior Lecturer. She is currently a member of the Council of the Nutrition Society of South Africa.