

# NYC announces progress in effort to reduce salt (Update)

February 11 2013, by Jennifer Peltz

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(AP)—Twenty-one companies have met targets in a New York City-led effort to get restaurants and food manufacturers nationwide to lighten up on salt, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Monday.

The improved products range from Butterball cold cuts to Heinz ketchup to some Starbucks breakfast sandwiches, according to Bloomberg.

The salt campaign—one in a series of novel but controversial healthy-eating initiatives on Bloomberg's 11-year tenure—takes aim at foods ranging from hot dogs to soup to popcorn.

"These companies have demonstrated their commitment to removing excess sodium from their products and to working with public health authorities toward a shared goal—helping their customers lead longer, healthier lives," Bloomberg said.

Noting that Americans eat about twice as much salt as they should and citing its link to high blood pressure and resulting diseases, the city set voluntary guidelines in 2010 for various restaurant and store-bought foods.

"Consumers can always add salt to food, but they can't take it out," Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley said at the time.

Companies were asked to agree to hit the salt target for categories of food—canned soup, for example—even if not every product made the

mark.

The targets included cutting salt in breakfast cereals and flavored snack chips by 40 percent, and trimming 25 percent of the salt in cold cuts, processed cheese and salsa. The goal was to cut salt levels in food by a quarter overall by 2014.

Participants, according to the city, range from Starbucks to online-order grocery and prepared food maker FreshDirect to giant Kraft Foods, maker of Oscar Mayer hot dogs, Planters peanuts and Velveeta cheese.

Dozens of state and local health departments signed on to follow New York's lead.

Bloomberg has seized on improving New Yorkers' eating habits as a public health priority, leading charges that have banned trans fats from restaurant meals, forced chain eateries to post calorie counts on menus and limited the size of some sugary drinks.

He and city officials say they're making pioneering, reasonable efforts to save lives and cut health care costs. But some food industry interests and consumers have said New York is turning into a nutrition nanny.

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