

Project launched to cut 'hidden' salt in foods

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Current research shows reducing our current salt intake to six grams per day could prevent nearly six per cent of strokes. But the onus is as much on food manufacturers, as well as consumers, to be less heavy-handed with the salt. And that is precisely what the PROCURED project seeks to achieve.

Launched on 23 January in Parma, the initiative aims to cut the amount of salt in the production of dry-cured meats, such as prosciutto, lardo, bresaola, capicola, guanciale and soppressata. The opposite of fast food, these meats are invariably high in salt because of the way that they are produced. Salt is used to prevent bacteria proliferation, as it leaves very low levels of water in the meat after being absorbed.

Dry-cured meats are still regarded by consumer as wholesome and traditional. And while salt curing is needed, it is widely acknowledged that dry-cured ham processors need improved technology to control the salting treatment of their products.

Cutting salt content in such products can be a 'win-win' - not only is it healthier but it also guarantees the expected final quality, something that is vital if European manufacturers are to remain competitive in a global market.

The 'PROCURED' project aims to develop and implement a new system of controlling the salting stage during dry-cured ham processing. A member of the scheme explains, 'The proposed solution relies on in-line modules, based on a fast and non-invasive technology, which measures the ham traits related to salt uptake and the absorbed salt amount during salting.'

The system is equipped with 'Artificial Neural Networks' software, which is trained to provide salting parameters according to raw ham properties and target [salt content](#). A pre-commercial system will be made available to companies at the end of the project.

The consortium includes dry-cured processors (GALLONI, CENT), appointed for validation of the technology, and SMEs in the meat processing industry (LENZ, ROSER, STEVIA, STRASSER). Scientific support is provided by RTDs (ATEKNEA, IRTA, SSICA). In time, it is hoped the project will make 'PROCURED' ham a distinctive option compared to its competitors.

PROCURED's objectives are also in compliance with the EU Regulation 1924/2006, a legislative measure which relates to nutrition and the health claims made on foods, including those which claim to contain 'reduced salt'.

The message for consumers? If you want to cut the levels of [salt](#) hidden inside your weekly shopping basket look out soon for 'ProCured' ham on the supermarket shelves.

Provided by CORDIS

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