



Press Release

High-Level Salt Iodisation Launching and Scale-Up Event

11 April 2009, Semera, Afar National Regional State

(Embargoed until 11 April 2009 - 11:00 a.m.)

In his opening remarks at today's salt iodisation launching and scale-up event, H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Minister of Health, reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to attain the target of Universal Salt Iodization (USI) by 2010. He highlighted the need to ensure access to iodine fortified salt and its consumption by every household in the country. Besides augmenting the availability of iodised salt in Ethiopia, a concerted effort will be made to increase public awareness regarding the health benefits of its utilisation. Dr. Tedros also stressed that collaboration between government bodies, private sectors, development partners, donors and civil societies was needed in order to address the public health threat caused by Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs).

H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom pointed out that Ethiopia had always been self-reliant in salt production and had the capacity to export. He further acknowledged efforts made by the Afar Regional Government and the all-round support from development partners in order to facilitate the realisation of salt iodisation at a national level. Apart from improved public health, the production of iodised salt had a wide range of benefits including the creation of intelligent children, productive society and employment opportunities for the local population.

Mr. Ted Chaiban, UNICEF Country Representative explained that iodine fortified salt is the single most effective means of meeting the daily requirement of the population (150µg/person/day) when the other dietary sources of iodine were limited. Stressing on the need of iodine intake for survival, Mr. Chaiban highlighted that if a mother suffers from iodine deficiency during her pregnancy period, there will be an irreversible damage on the child's brain development. An iodine deficient population will be less because of its negative impact on health, poor physical growth, compromised intellectual capacity and lower education attainment. The estimated productivity loss due to IDD in Ethiopia was Birr 64 billion between 2006 and 2015.



Mr. Chaiban pointed out that Ethiopia was able to produce high quality salt to meet the annual demand of 350,000 MT for its 74 million populations. However, he expressed his concerns over the fact that the salt produced in the country is not iodised and inadequate accessibility of iodised salt in the country, which was currently estimated to be less than 5%. As such, he urged the government to maintain its commitment and commended the proposed scale-up efforts towards achieving the Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) by 2010.

From his side, H.E. Ato Ismail Ali Sero President of Afar Regional State pointed out the Afar region was able to meet 95% of the country's demand for salt and had the potential to double its production. According to the President, the region had also taken programme ownership and responsibility to supply the nation with the much needed iodised salt. Additionally, the Salt Producers Association reaffirmed their commitments to support and facilitate the national effort in producing and distributing iodised salt through adherence to the national standards.

For more information please contact:

Dr. Belaynesh Yifru, Urban Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Federal Ministry of Health

Tel: 0911712412, email: ybmulugeta@yahoo.com

Shemsedin Bamboro, Public Relations Officer, Federal Ministry of Health

Tel: 0912175296, email: sbamboro@yahoo.com

Dr. Kerida Mcdonald, Chief, Communication Cluster, UNICEF Ethiopia

Tel: 011 518 4000, email: kmcdonald@unicef.org