

MI partners to push forward the case of Universal Salt Iodization (USI) Legislation in Pakistan

AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR, July 22, 2008 – The President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) has issued a notification putting a ban on the sale of non-iodised salt effective June 18 this year. This presidential notification is a welcome step and the third in a series of MI facilitated USI notifications, following those in Karachi and Multan, thereby covering a population of more than 21 million.

MI, with support from its partners on the USI program, the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, WHO and WFP, has been making several efforts to improve the quality of iodized salt in the country along with increasing the iodization of salt at the production level. A multi-prong approach was used to tackle this issue: political advocacy to bring matters to the forefront were coupled with media campaigns ensuring improved general awareness about the subject. MI assistance included the provision of equipment for iodine testing to the quality control laboratories and training to staff involved in the monitoring and sample collection, as well as training technical staff in the laboratories. Salt processors in the region were motivated and convinced to iodize salt for the health of the community, were provided requisite equipment for iodisation, adequate training in iodization techniques and supplied KIO₃ (potassium iodate) at subsidized rates.

In order to set the stage for an effective legislation, MI is already supporting the main salt suppliers in AJ&K, the small scale processors, through a CIDA-funded, WFP-supported project, assisting these groups in training on iodization techniques, provision of KIO₃ at subsidized rates and rapid test kits (RTKs) for field testing of iodine in salt, as well as standardized quality pouches. In addition, MI also supported the refurbishment of their salt crushing units.

These notifications are a critical step forward in the process of developing legislation on USI for Pakistan. Next steps include the organization of a workshop to share and get feedback on the USI legislation for AJK. Work on legislation in the form of an act/ ordinance for approval by the State Assembly is also in progress. A draft national level legislation, drafted with support from MI and its partners in this assignment, is presently with the Cabinet Division and after approval would be submitted to the National Assembly Secretariat for endorsement.

For more information please contact Vandana Raheja, Communications Officer, Asia Region at vraheja@micronutrient.org