SUPPORT FOR PHASE 3 FROM THE BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM

Dr Kevin Hawkins, OBE
Director General

1. Thank you for the opportunity to add **my** support this evening. The FSA's previous campaigns have been successful in raising the profile of salt intake but the challenge for all of us, with salt as with **five a day**, is to translate **much more** of this **awareness** into **action**.

2. Our members have actively supported the FSA's campaign on salt since it started, and they're strongly committed to helping their customers achieve the 6 grammes a day target by 2010.

3. As a matter of record, several of our members started reducing the salt content of their own-brand products towards the end of the **1990's** in response to customer concerns, **well before** the FSA launched Phase One of this campaign in 2003.

4. Since then our members have been at the **forefront** of this campaign, **reformulating** products to cut the **salt content** and giving customers clearer **information on pack** to help them make healthy choices. Working with the FSA, our members have consistently demonstrated **their** progress towards the 6 grammes a day **target**, reducing salt in **key categories** such as **ready meals**,

sandwiches, **sauces** and **soups**.

5. In fact, in most cases they have already achieved **all of the FSA's targets**, especially in sandwiches, soup and ready meals, and are working on **further** improvements.

6. Anyone who wants to see at a glance what **each** of our leading members has achieved in reducing salt, fat and sugar, in their own-brand products will find the details in our recent publication "Healthy Options".

7. But we're not **complacent** about **any** of this, so we **certainly** welcome phase 3 of the campaign. The latest **research** on consumer behaviour by the **IGD** confirms **yet again** that salt content **on its own** is a relatively **weak** influence on shoppers when they are deciding what to buy. Other factors such as **price**, **fat content**, the **brand name** and awareness of all the **ingredients** in a product are **significantly** more influential.

8. So our members have been making it easier for consumers to identify the **salt** content of a product by **clearly distinguishing** it on the label from the **sodium** content.

9. We do, however, face some quite serious **challenges** if we're **going to be** where we **need** to be by 2010.

- **First**, because most of the **easy wins** have already been achieved. So retailers, along with their suppliers, will be investing **more resources** in product innovation and development to achieve **less dramatic results**.

- **Second**, because reformulation to reduce salt is only **one** part of our members' **broader** work in reducing saturated fat and sugar levels in key categories, all of this has to be carefully managed so as to **gradually modify** consumers' **expectations** of taste and flavour. Most people tend to buy very much the same products every week, so any changes you make in the taste and flavour of these products has to be very carefully done.

- And **finally**, because if we really **are** going to achieve the sort of changes in consumer diets and lifestyles we **all want to see**, it's going to take **every element** within the food supply chain, including the large number of small players in the **food service sector**, to act with the same level of **commitment**.

10. That said, I believe we **will** get there and BRC members will **certainly** be doing their best to ensure we do.