**CURRENT DEBATES ON FOOD SALT**

***Yasemin Ahmed Hassan1,[[1]](#footnote-1)\*, Hüdayi ERCOŞKUN2***

*1* 0000-0002-3061-2855 Tikrit University,Tikrit, Mosul, Iraq

*2* 0000-0002-1788-8400, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Food Engineering, Çankırı Karatekin University Çankırı, Türkiye

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| **Abstract**  Salt has been integral to human nutrition and culinary practices throughout history, providing essential minerals and enhancing food flavor. However, high sodium intake is strongly linked to health risks, particularly hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and kidney issues, leading to increased attention on sodium reduction in diets. This study explores the mineral composition of various salt types, including table salt, sea salt, and natural rock salts like Himalayan and Çankırı salts, evaluating their potassium, calcium, magnesium, and iron content. While these salts contribute trace minerals, they do not meet daily nutritional needs on their own, making a balanced diet essential for adequate mineral intake.  In response to sodium-related health concerns, low-sodium salt alternatives—achieved by partially replacing sodium chloride with potassium chloride—have emerged. Although beneficial for sodium reduction, potassium chloride can produce a metallic taste, posing sensory challenges for consumers. Flavor enhancers are sometimes used to improve the palatability of low-sodium salts, facilitating their acceptance as a healthier alternative. Additionally, gourmet salts, prized for their unique trace mineral content and culinary qualities, have gained popularity, though they provide only minimal mineral contributions to daily intake requirements.  Beyond dietary applications, this study examines salt therapy’s potential in respiratory health and dermatological care. Salt therapy, often conducted in salt caves or specialized rooms, may alleviate conditions such as asthma, COPD, and certain skin disorders. The therapeutic use of Çankırı’s salt caves, specifically, has garnered interest in both health and tourism sectors. However, while preliminary findings suggest some respiratory benefits, further research is necessary to confirm salt therapy’s effectiveness and establish evidence-based guidelines for its use in wellness tourism.  The study also reviews global sodium reduction strategies, including governmental and public health initiatives to lower sodium levels in processed foods and promote awareness of sodium-related health risks. Such efforts, supported by organizations like the World Health Organization, aim to reduce the prevalence of diet-related diseases by encouraging lower sodium intake and the adoption of healthier eating habits.  In conclusion, while salt is vital to human health, responsible consumption is crucial. Reducing sodium intake, selecting low-sodium alternatives, and using salt primarily as a flavor enhancer rather than a mineral source are key to better health outcomes. Additionally, expanding clinical research on salt therapy may open new pathways in health tourism and natural wellness practices.  **References:**  [1] Ercoşkun, H. (2021). Tuz ve gıda. In H. Ercoşkun (Ed.), Her yönüyle tuz (pp. 77-106). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.  [2] Sevinç, İ. A., Toptancı, İ., & Ercoşkun, H. (2021). Tuz ve sağlık. In H. Ercoşkun (Ed.), *Her yönüyle tuz* (pp. 55-64). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.  [3] Bayrakçeken Nişancı, F., & Ercoşkun, H. (2023). Food safety debates of salt. In 2nd International Karatekin Science and Technology Conference (pp. 238-242).  [4] Ercoşkun, H. (2022). Impurities of natural salts of the earth. Food Additives & Contaminants: Part B, 16(1), 24-31.  [5] Salçın, N., Demirci, E., & Toptancı, İ. (2020). Dünya tuz ekonomisi. In H. Ercoşkun (Ed.), Her yönüyle tuz (pp. 1-10). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık. |

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1. \* Corresponding author. *e-mail address: yassminahmad198@gmail.com* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)