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Ministerial decision regarding iodine informed by evidence from K2P at AUB

A K2P Policy Brief entitled “Informing Salt Iodization Policies to Ensure Optimal Iodine Nutrition in Lebanon” which was prepared by the Knowledge to Policy Center (K2P) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) prompted the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon to issue a decision pertaining to law 178/2011 regarding salt iodization and monitoring mechanism.

The K2P Policy Brief was developed in close collaboration with both, the Center for Research on Population Health (CRPH) at the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences at AUB.

The decision of the ministry was informed by the deliberations at the K2P Policy Dialogue in the presence of the Director General of the Ministry of Public Health Dr. Walid Ammar, K2P Policy Dialogue convened different stakeholders and representatives from: the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Economy and Trade, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Lebanese Standards Institution Libnor, Consumers Lebanon, producing, packaging, and refining salt factories, international non-governmental organizations, as well as physicians, experts, researchers and academicians, who all deliberated over evidence-based and context-specific options related to salt iodization policies in Lebanon.

Iodine deficiency is a pressing problem in Lebanese population and it has dire and avoidable health consequences. Iodine deficiency yields detrimental health effects known, collectively as “Iodine Deficiency Disorders” (IDD). Other consequences such as goiter or cretinism occur in cases of chronic severe iodine deficiency. An existing law (178/2011) mandates salt iodization in Lebanon. However, its weak implementation as well as the poor evaluation and monitoring systems have led to this critical health issue.

The decision (no.1/1199), which was published in the official gazette on July 21st 2016, mandates that all salt factories in Lebanon abide by the law in terms of adding potassium iodate to table and cooking salt at a rate of 60-80 milligrams of potassium iodate per kilogram of salt. The decision also prohibits the trading of non-iodized salt for packaging companies. The fifth article of the resolution stipulates regular monitoring by the Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Trade and Ministry of Industry.

Such evidence-informed health decisions shed light on the approach lead by the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon which is increasing its reliance on synthesized evidence and context specific knowledge to inform its decisions and policies.

ENDS

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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