A pinch of iodized salt can save the brains of millions

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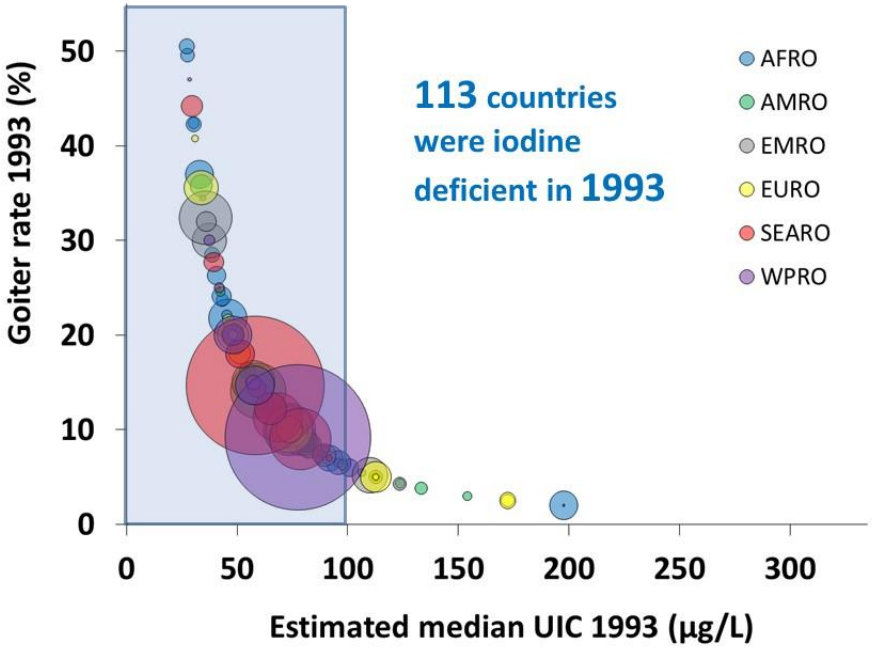
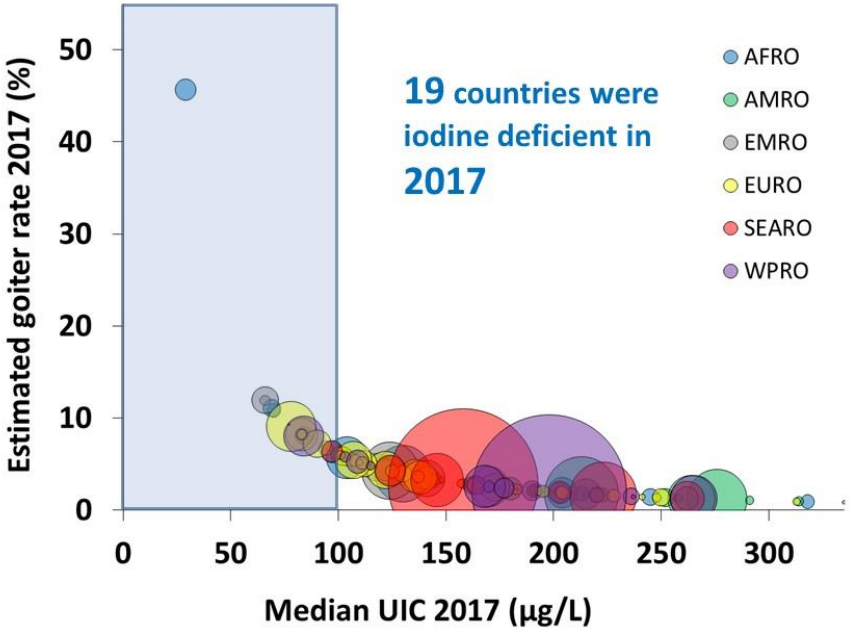
Importance of iodine

- Essential component of thyroid hormones
- **Brain development, metabolic and neurological function**
- Mild deficiency: IQ loss and **reduced learning capacity**
- More sustained deficiency: Goiter – enlarged thryroid
- Severe deficiency: irreversible mental retardation, cretinism

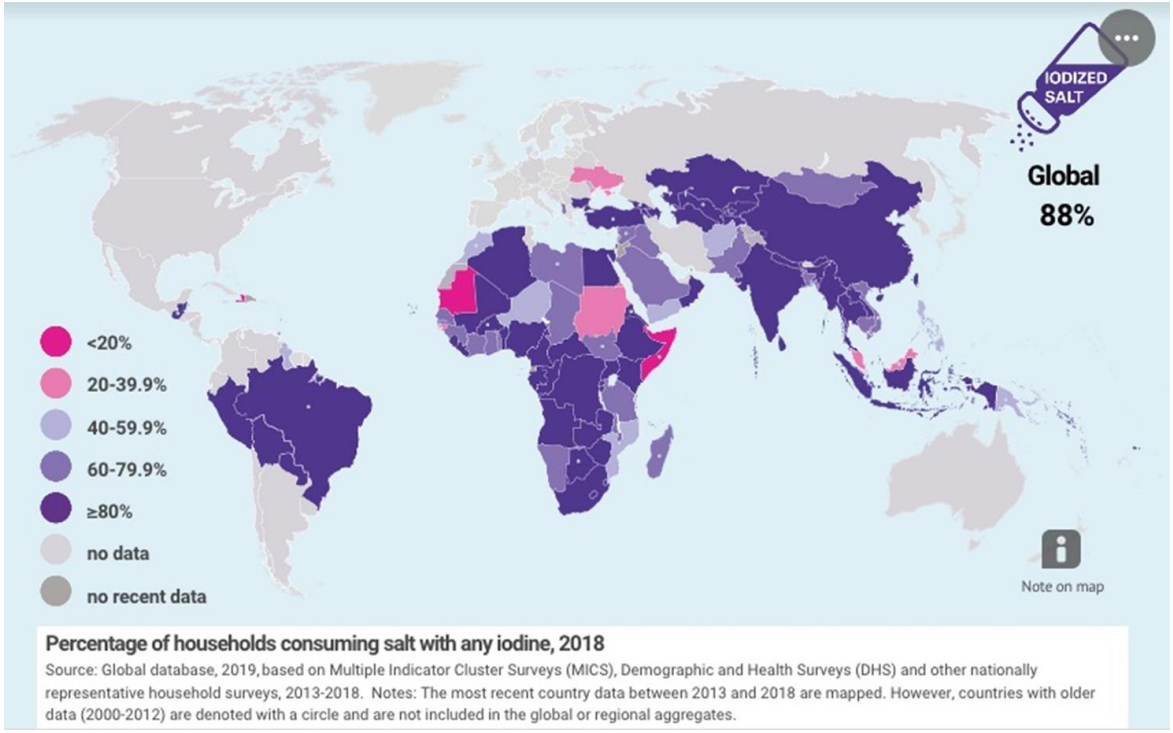
Global iodine deficiency in the early 1990s…

…..and in 2015





88% of the population in LMICs has access to iodized salt



Percentage of households consuming salt with any iodine, 2018

Source: Global database, 2019, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and other nationally representative household surveys, 2013-2018. Notes: The most recent country data between 2013 and 2018 are mapped. However, countries with older data (2000-2012) are denoted with a circle and are not included in the global or regional aggregates.

Reference: https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/iodine

What is next?

- Salt needs to be iodized forever – so progress must be maintained
- Food systems are changing – so continuous monitoring and adaptation is critical
- Global priorities and national contexts are changing – food patterns, organic foods, salt reduction, processed foods, COVID-19, etc., so we must adapt
- Countries and regions (e.g. Europe) are slipping back – so we must prevent this
- Some countries still need improvement – so we need to help them

How IGN works

- Monitoring the global situation and shaping the direction of programmes and policy
- Guidance on salt iodization programming in a changing world
- Management, depository and sharing of knowledge
- Convenor of partners, including salt industry
- Advocate

Conclusions

- Universal salt iodization has been one of the great public health success stories of the last 25 years
- Leveraged the experience of multiple partners and worked with a common goal and aspiration; public-private-civic partnership
- Now, we need a mechanism to strengthen and sustain programs to assure optimal iodine status, protect brains, and avoid the very real risk of slipping back into deficiency
- IGN aims to be that mechanism