Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Protocol for a cluster-randomized trial to determine the effects of advocacy actions on the salt levels of processed foods

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 15 May 2015

**Reviewer:** Michel Joffres

**Reviewer’s report:**

This is an important study, with major policy implications that go beyond Australia.

There is a definite need for well designed randomized studies, and with the addition of a qualitative component, this study will provide advocacy groups with evidence about what can or cannot work. My only concern (not major) with this design is the relatively short follow up of 24 months. I am not sure that this time frame will give enough time for the advocacy process to result in manufacturing practices and therefore enough time to observe a change in sodium content at 12 and 24 months. Statistical significance would require a 12% change and it might be difficult for some companies to reach such a sudden change even though it would be a desirable and feasible change. I do hope that long term monitoring will be added to this design.

However, even if the sodium reduction level does not reach statistical significance, the interim measures should be an important marker of changes (or no changes) to come.

Despite these questions, this is a much needed study conducted by an excellent group, which will benefit health policy at a global level.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests