

Growing Scientific Evidence Supporting MSG's Safety and Functionality Strengthened its Acceptance

07 April 2026 | News

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As the global push to reduce sodium intake gains momentum, the role of taste in driving healthier eating habits has come into sharper focus. At a February 2026 workshop hosted by CSIR's Central Food Technological Research Institute, Miro Smriga, Executive Officer and Head of Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs at Ajinomoto Co. Inc., underscored the potential of monosodium glutamate (MSG) as a practical solution. In an interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum he highlighted that incorporating MSG into Indian traditional foods can reduce sodium levels by 22-35 per cent without compromising sensory quality or taste—helping maintain flavour balance while overcoming key challenges in sodium reduction, particularly in terms of consumer acceptance and food processing. Edited experts;

How exactly has MSG contributed to salt reduction in Japan?

In Japan, MSG has contributed to salt reduction primarily by improving the palatability of reduced-salt processed foods, including seasonings, which are widely consumed. The use of MSG allows for a reduction in sodium content while maintaining palatability.

Replacing sodium chloride with MSG—depending on the food type—can significantly lower sodium levels. For example, sodium reduction of up to 40 per cent has been observed in soups without compromising consumer acceptance.

At a population level, widespread adoption of low-sodium foods formulated with umami substances could substantially reduce overall salt intake. Japan has also implemented national health initiatives aimed at reducing average salt consumption, with clear targets set for the coming years.

How did you address concerns that MSG is harmful? Has public perception in Japan changed over time? What strategies would you recommend for countries like India?

Concerns around MSG have been addressed primarily through science-based communication and direct engagement with key stakeholders, including journalists, dietitians, healthcare professionals, and chefs.

We have focused on explaining the scientific evidence supporting MSG's safety, while also highlighting that umami compounds occur naturally in many foods and even in human breast milk.

In Japan, public perception was influenced by global debates in the 1960s. Over time, continued research and transparent communication have helped improve understanding and acceptance. Regulatory guidance has also helped ensure that product labelling does not mislead consumers.

In markets like India, we view the situation not as strong opposition but as understandable caution. Addressing this requires clear, consistent, and science-based communication, supported by trusted experts. Building awareness through dialogue remains the most effective approach.

How does global pressure to reduce sodium create opportunities for MSG and umami solutions?

Reducing sodium intake is a major global health priority, as consumption levels in many countries exceed recommended limits.

Ajinomoto addresses this through initiatives that promote the use of umami to help maintain palatability while reducing salt. By balancing salt and MSG in a way that suits local cuisines, this approach supports healthier diets without compromising Taste.

This creates opportunities across multiple segments, including home cooking, food service, and processed foods, where maintaining overall sensory appeal is essential for consumer acceptance.

What are the key growth drivers shaping the global MSG market?

The global MSG market is increasingly shaped by public health priorities, food reformulation efforts, and improved scientific understanding.

Rising awareness of non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension and cardiovascular conditions, has increased focus on reducing sodium intake. MSG plays a role here because it contains significantly less sodium than table salt while helping preserve savoury taste and overall palatability.

At the same time, growing scientific evidence supporting MSG's safety and functionality has strengthened its acceptance among regulators, health professionals, and consumers.

Overall, demand is being driven by the need for healthier yet flavourful food solutions, with regional variations depending on dietary habits and regulatory frameworks.

How will emerging markets like India influence future MSG demand?

Emerging markets such as India are expected to play a significant role in future MSG demand. Factors such as population growth, expansion of the food service sector, and increasing awareness of MSG are contributing to this trend. Additionally, MSG is produced from plant-based raw materials, making it relevant in markets with large vegetarian populations.

Future growth will depend not just on volume, but on how well MSG and umami solutions are adapted to local cuisines and culinary practices—particularly in supporting reduced-sodium diets without compromising palatability.

How do you see the MSG market evolving over the next 5–10 years, and what role will Ajinomoto play?

Over the next decade, the MSG market is expected to evolve alongside changing needs in nutrition, health, and sustainability.

One key challenge is the impact of climate change on agricultural raw materials such as sugarcane, cassava, and corn, which are used in MSG production.

Ajinomoto aims to address this through a holistic approach across the value chain—from supporting farmers to ensuring sustainable sourcing and resource utilisation. By-products from production are reused in agriculture, contributing to a circular, environmentally responsible system. The company's role will be to continue delivering safe, high-quality, and sustainable solutions while supporting healthier diets globally.

What regulatory standards govern MSG safety globally?

Globally, MSG has been evaluated by international food safety authorities and is considered safe when used according to good manufacturing practices.

While regulatory frameworks differ across countries, the overall scientific consensus on MSG safety is consistent. Variations typically relate to labelling requirements, permitted food categories, and usage guidelines rather than fundamental safety assessments.

In which food categories has MSG-driven sodium reduction been most successful?

MSG has been successfully used to reduce sodium across a wide range of food categories, including soups, processed meats, dairy products, and bread.

Depending on the formulation and food type, sodium reductions can range significantly while maintaining sensory appeal and consumer acceptance. MSG helps enhance overall flavours, making reduced-sodium products more appealing.

Does MSG work better in certain cuisines, such as Indian food?

MSG is particularly effective in cuisines with complex, savoury flavour profiles, including Indian cuisine.

Indian cooking relies on layered flavours from spices, herbs, and ingredients such as onion, garlic, and tomatoes. MSG complements these profiles and helps maintain flavour balance, even when salt levels are reduced.

Evidence suggests that MSG works well across various Indian dishes, supporting flavour enhancement and consumer acceptability. Its ability to preserve taste while enabling sodium reduction makes it especially relevant in such culinary contexts.

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