

FDA allows salt substitutes in 139 standardized foods

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Summary

The US Food and Drug Administration issued a final rule on 9 October 2026 letting manufacturers replace some or all of the added salt in 139 regulated foods with substitutes such as potassium chloride. Readers learn which foods are covered, what labels must show, and why people with kidney disease should take care.

Full text (English)

On 9 October 2026 the US FDA announced a final rule (91 FR 65040, published 13 October 2026) permitting "safe and suitable" salt substitutes in 139 foods whose recipes are fixed by federal standards of identity — bread, cheeses, canned vegetables, canned tuna, mayonnaise, margarine, chocolate and more. A new section, 21 CFR 130.30, defines a salt substitute as an ingredient that replaces some or all added salt, cuts sodium and still does salt's job in the food; 80 standards were amended directly and 59 others follow automatically. The rule takes effect on 14 December 2026, with objections to the dairy parts due by 12 November 2026; using a substitute is entirely voluntary, so there is no compliance date. No new label rules are added, but any substitute must be named in the ingredient list, potassium chloride must appear by name, and potassium must be declared on the Nutrition Facts panel when a serving holds 2% or more of the Daily Value. The FDA refused to require a hyperkalemia warning, arguing the label already carries the information. The health case rests on research linking lower sodium with lower blood pressure, including the large Chinese SSaSS and DECIDE-Salt trials of potassium-enriched salt, and a 2025 WHO guideline that covers table salt only and excludes people with kidney impairment. The FDA says it cannot predict how many products will be reformulated or how much sodium will actually fall, and will monitor potassium intake data. People with chronic kidney disease, heart failure or on potassium-sparing medicines or ACE inhibitors should read ingredient lists, since the trials deliberately excluded them.