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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SURVEY: SHAKEN BY SALT, CONSUMERS GO BACK TO BASICS WITH TRULY NATURAL, FRESH FOODS**

**Foster Farms finds consumers are more vigilant about salt intake than ever, are saying “No” to plumping and designer salt, and favor fresh, minimally processed foods.**

LIVINGSTON, Calif. – The nation’s attention to salt shows no signs of letting up. Leading health organizations like the Institute of Medicine are calling on the FDA to set formal sodium standards. The FDA has outlined a plan for proposed regulation, and some food producers have already pledged to reduce sodium content. But consumers are impatient for action.

A new survey released today by West Coast poultry producer Foster Farms reveals that consumers are paying more attention to sodium than ever, believe sodium levels should never have been as high in the first place, and are taking action to ensure the foods they depend on for healthy meals aren’t loaded with salt. Today marks the expansion of Foster Farms’ “Say No to Plumping” consumer awareness campaign dedicated to emphasizing the family-owned company’s longtime commitment to never “plumping” its fresh, raw chicken with added sodium, salt water, or preservatives.

To gauge current consumer mind-sets about salt, Foster Farms commissioned an NSON Opinion Strategy survey of 1,000 West Coast consumers in April. The survey found that the majority of consumers are highly aware of sodium intake and are increasingly skeptical of “natural” and “healthy” labels. Consumers overwhelmingly prefer fresh, minimally processed foods for a healthy diet. The survey also found that consumers are now highly aware of added sodium in supposedly healthy foods like “plumped” chicken.

- 77% of consumers polled **watch sodium intake at least some of the time**, with 62% watching intake all or most of the time now, compared to 53% last year.
- 70% believe that even **food labeled “natural” or “healthy” can be harmful to health**. Just 4% of consumers consider foods labeled “natural” to be the healthiest choice.
- While 55% of consumers believe that foods low in sodium can be considered healthy, **the vast majority of consumers (90%) ultimately trust fresh, minimally processed foods as truly healthy and natural**.
- 70% say it is unnecessary for companies to engineer lower salt alternatives like “designer” salt and **companies should have kept sodium naturally low in the first place**.
- **62% are concerned by what they read on food labels**. 30% feel “overwhelmed.” One-third of consumers feel that shopping for healthy foods has become too complicated. These consumers don’t know “who or what to trust” and feel that the “rules” of what constitutes healthy food are always changing.

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- **The majority of consumers (56%) feel that labels are only somewhat accurate** (and therefore less reliable).
- 70% of consumers are now aware that some fresh, raw, unseasoned chicken labeled “natural” at the grocery store may have been injected or plumped with up to 15% or \$1.50 worth of salt water. This is compared to 37% percent last year. **86% say they don’t think fresh chicken plumped with salt water should be allowed to be labeled “natural.”**

Today with the majority of consumers now aware of and concerned about “plumping”—or the practice of some chicken companies injecting fresh chicken with salt water and labeling it “natural”—Foster Farms launches the second phase of its “Say No to Plumping” ([www.saynotoplumping.com](http://www.saynotoplumping.com)) consumer education campaign to help consumers identify and avoid higher sodium, fresh chicken products while promoting label integrity in the quest for healthy foods.

“We launched ‘Say No to Plumping’ last year to make consumers more aware of hidden sodium in fresh foods, specifically fresh, raw chicken,” said Ira Brill, Director of Communications for Foster Farms. “This survey affirms not only that we succeeded in raising awareness, but that consumers care enough to take action. More than 50,000 consumers have already signed a petition urging the USDA to stop allowing ‘plumped’ chicken to be labeled ‘natural.’ It’s a sign that there is a growing consumer movement to reclaim ‘natural’ and choose simple, fresh foods that they don’t have to decode.”

“This year, we want to inspire consumers to spread the word further, take action against misleading labeling, and help their family and friends know what to look for in healthy foods,” continues Brill. “Fresh chicken is a staple for many families’ healthy diets, and consumers should be able to trust that they are getting the nutritious ingredient they expect, not a salt-laden imitation.”

Foster Farms’ “Say No to Plumping” program includes the return of the infamous Foster Imposters in the company’s popular *Shady Surgeon* and *Supermarket* advertisements on television (available online at [www.fosterfarms.com](http://www.fosterfarms.com)), refreshed content on its website ([www.saynotoplumping.com](http://www.saynotoplumping.com)), and upcoming promotions on Facebook ([www.Facebook.com/SayNotoPlumping](http://www.Facebook.com/SayNotoPlumping)). The campaign will be brought to life at consumer events and festivals throughout the West Coast all summer long. Supporters of “Say No to Plumping” are encouraged to take action by signing a petition to the USDA prohibiting the labeling of “plumped” chicken as “natural” on the campaign’s interactive website ([www.saynotoplumping.com/petition](http://www.saynotoplumping.com/petition).) The Foster Farms website, [www.fosterfarms.com](http://www.fosterfarms.com), features low-sodium recipes as well as shopping and eating tips from the company’s nutritionist.

“Consumers are fed up with having to overthink food,” said Nancy Bennett, MS, RD, CDE, Foster Farms’ nutritionist. “An easy solution is to stick to foods that you know are good choices: 70% of our sodium intake actually comes from processed foods. So to really reduce salt in your diet, aim to eat most of your foods in their purest, simplest form. For chicken, that means sticking to fresh, raw chicken with less than 75 mg of sodium per serving.”

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Label comparisons of fresh chicken reveal that one four-ounce serving of plumped chicken could contain as much as 440 mg of sodium, over 500% more than truly natural chicken<sup>1</sup>. Based on the Centers for Disease Control's dietary guidelines of 1500 mg per day or less<sup>2</sup> of sodium, eating just one, unseasoned serving of some brands' poultry could add up to nearly a third of the recommended daily intake. From an economic standpoint, it also means that a family of four could spend more than \$150 annually on salt water alone<sup>3</sup>.

**About Say No to Plumping**

Foster Farms launched Say No to Plumping in 2009 to promote the brand's longtime commitment to truly natural fresh chicken. Unlike its competitors, since its 1939 founding, Foster Farms has never injected its fresh chicken labeled 100% natural with sodium, salt water, or any other preservative. For more information, visit [www.saynotoplumping.com](http://www.saynotoplumping.com).

**About Foster Farms**

Since 1939, West Coast families have depended on Foster Farms for premium quality chicken and turkey products. Family-owned and operated, the company continues its legacy of excellence and commitment to quality established by its founders, Max and Verda Foster. Foster Farms specializes in fresh, all-natural chicken and turkey products free of preservatives, additives, or injected sodium enhancers. Based in California's Central Valley, with ranches also in the Pacific Northwest, the company's fresh chicken and turkey are produced in or near each region served. Foster Farms also produces delicious premarinated, ready-to-cook, and fully cooked products that meet the quality and convenience needs of today's home cooks, retailers, warehouse clubs, and food service customers. The company's commitment to excellence, honesty, quality, service, and people is a source of great pride, and a longtime family tradition.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: For additional information including full survey findings, video, and images to enhance sodium coverage, interviews with sodium labeling experts, poultry consumption data, label comparisons, and facts and figures behind "plumping," please contact Michael Kellner at 415-392-1000 or [mkellner@finemanpr.com](mailto:mkellner@finemanpr.com).**

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<sup>1</sup> Foster Farms all-natural chicken breasts contain 67 mg of sodium per serving.

<sup>2</sup> "[Application of Lower Sodium Intake Recommendations to Adults — United States, 1999–2006.](#)" *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 27 March 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Average chicken consumption of 86 lbs/capita per year (USDA), average price for chicken breast at \$3.33/lb (USDA) and up to 15% salt water content by weight (Truthful Labeling Coalition).