

7-Step Guide for Country Policymakers to Develop and Implement a Trans Fat Elimination Policy

Artificial trans fat is a compound still used in some countries as a substitute for butter or lard in fried and deep-fried food, baked goods, and spreads. Trans fat clogs arteries and leads to heart attacks. Globally, artificial trans fat was estimated to cause more than half a million deaths every year. Many governments are already successfully protecting their people by eliminating artificial trans fats and replacing them with healthier alternatives. The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for the global elimination of artificial trans fat by 2023 with the [REPLACE initiative](#).

Enacting mandatory laws that limit artificial trans fat will save lives, save money, and promote health equity.

By following these simple steps, countries can develop and implement this life-saving policy:

1 Commit to eliminate artificial trans fat from the national food supply.

Trans fat elimination is a feasible and effective way to save lives, reduce health care costs and invest in nutrition and overall food safety in a country.

➤ This [factsheet](#) outlines the key reasons for immediate policy action.

2 Determine which government entity will enact and enforce the rule.

Many governments have a single food regulator (such as a national food and drug control agency) with authority to limit unhealthy compounds, such as trans fat. Multiple government bodies might also share regulatory responsibility for different phases of the food supply chain.

➤ WHO's How-to guide for trans fat policy development ([REPLACE Module 3](#)) includes guidance on mapping government bodies with the responsibility and authority to enact and enforce the rule.

3 Establish a proper scope for the artificial trans fat restriction.

There are two best-practice policy models that fully protect people from artificial trans fat without overreaching:

- Mandatory national restriction that limits artificial trans fat to 2% of total fat content in all foods; OR
- Mandatory national ban on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) in all foods.

The most appropriate policy options will depend on country-specific factors. In some cases, a combination of both policies may be suitable.

➤ WHO's How-to guide for trans fat policy development ([REPLACE Module 3](#)) includes a decision guide in Annex 1 that helps policy-makers select the policy option that works best for the country context.

4 Determine the date when the restriction will come into force.

Regulatory measures to eliminate artificial trans fat should go into effect as early as possible, while also giving food producers time to test and reformulate products, acquire new supply lines and renegotiate contracts, redesign and produce new labels, and exhaust existing stock. An effective date 6-18 months following approval and publication of the final legal measure provides a reasonable transition period.

5 Conduct policy awareness briefings and media outreach.

To promote compliance, the government should inform stakeholders about the upcoming policy. A comprehensive communications strategy that frames the policy as a necessary public health measure that saves lives will help ensure all stakeholders understand and comply with the new requirements. Industry stakeholders may also share technical knowledge and reformulation challenges during this process.

- WHO's How-to guide for trans fat policy development ([REPLACE Module 5](#)) provides recommendations on conducting public media campaigns and other activities to raise awareness.
- WHO's How-to guide for trans fat policy development ([REPLACE Module 2](#)) provides recommendations on providing support on healthier replacement oils and fats.

6 Draft and enact the policy.

Depending on the legal framework in each country, restrictions may be enacted through a new or amended law, regulation, subdecree or other legal measure. Appropriate procedures should be followed, including consultation and coordination among government agencies and stakeholders prior to enactment as required.

Key elements of an effective trans fat restriction include:

- Proper scope of regulation applies to all food, oils and fats
- Legal authority to inspect products and facilities
- Mandatory trans fat disclosure in nutrient declaration and ingredients lists that provide clear information to consumers and inspectors
- Defined legal obligations with appropriate penalties for violations

- [This regulatory checklist](#) provides an overview of provisions that should be in place for an effective trans fat regulation and can be used to determine if the existing regulatory framework already includes relevant provisions on trans fat elimination.
- This Drafting Tool (coming soon) outlines the key provisions that should be included in a trans fat elimination policy, uses question prompts to guide users in drafting a regulation specific to the country context, and provides model legal language.

7 Enforce the policy.

Compliance should be monitored across the entire supply chain. Monitoring techniques may include label analyses of packaged foods, laboratory testing, investigation of manufacturing facilities, and review of documents and records such as customer and shipping records. Companies can also be required to submit a declaration of compliance. Penalties should be strong enough to deter violations, while remaining proportionate to the offence.

Limited enforcement resources should be focused on critical control points (i.e., actors, places, and situations where violations are most likely to occur).

- WHO's How-to guide for trans fat policy development ([REPLACE Module 6](#)) provides recommendations on effective compliance monitoring and enforcement strategies.