

Trans Fat Trends in India

Trans fat levels decreased between 2004 and 2018, but there are still many products available to consumers with dangerously high levels of this harmful fat.



- Artificial trans fat is a toxic ingredient that increases the risk of heart attack and was estimated to cause 540,000 deaths globally each year.
- Artificial trans fat can be eliminated and replaced with healthier alternatives without changing the taste or cost of food.
- Replacing trans fats with healthier fats and oils containing mono and poly-unsaturated fatty acids can save millions of lives.
- Trans fat regulations should be extended to apply to all foods, not only fats and oils.



Current Regulations

Since August 2017, regulations in India have limited trans fats to no more than 5% by weight (down from 10% in 2015) in four categories of fats and oils (vanaspati, bakery shortening, bakery and industrial margarine and interesterified vegetable fat). In December 2018, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India proposed draft regulations to limit trans fats to 2% by weight of all fats and oils by January 2022.

According to the World Health Organization, best-practice trans fat regulations include limiting artificial trans fat to 2% of total fat in all fats, oils **and foods**. Because the current Indian regulations do not cover all food, Indians are still at risk of adverse health effects from trans fat consumption.



Trends in Trans Fats

Data on trans fats levels in partially hydrogenated vegetable oil (PHO) and food samples from 2004 to 2018 in India confirms that trans fat reduction is possible: average trans fat levels in tested products (189 PHOs, 514 food samples) decreased considerably from 2004 to 2018. The maximum amount of trans fat found in PHOs decreased from 39% in 2004 to 7% in 2018. The total amount of harmful fats (trans + saturated fats) did not increase (Figures 1 and 2). Still, many PHOs and foods contain more than 5% trans fat (Table 1), despite current regulations. These foods may put already vulnerable groups more at risk of heart disease. Biscuits and fan (a popular and inexpensive baked food) were found to have high levels of trans fats.



Next Steps

- Stricter monitoring and enforcement to ensure adherence to the current regulation
- Reducing the permissible limit of trans fat to 2% of fats in all fats, oils and foods to best protect Indians from this toxic ingredient
- Passage of the proposed regulation to expand limits to all fats and oils and limiting trans fats to 2%
- Additional policies and technological innovations promoting availability and use of healthier oils in foods

FIGURE 1

Trans fats, saturated fats and total harmful fats in PHOs, by year

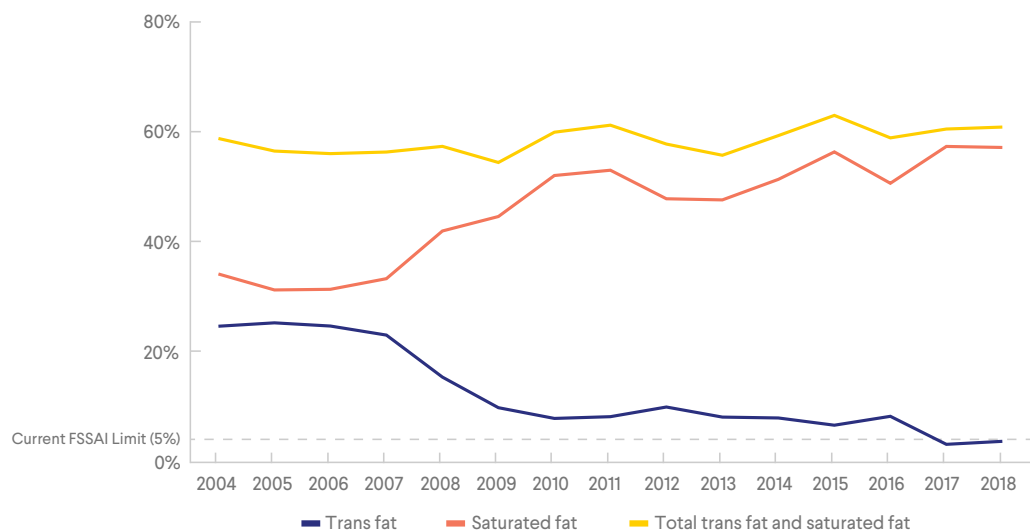


FIGURE 2

Trans fats per 100 grams of fats in foods by year

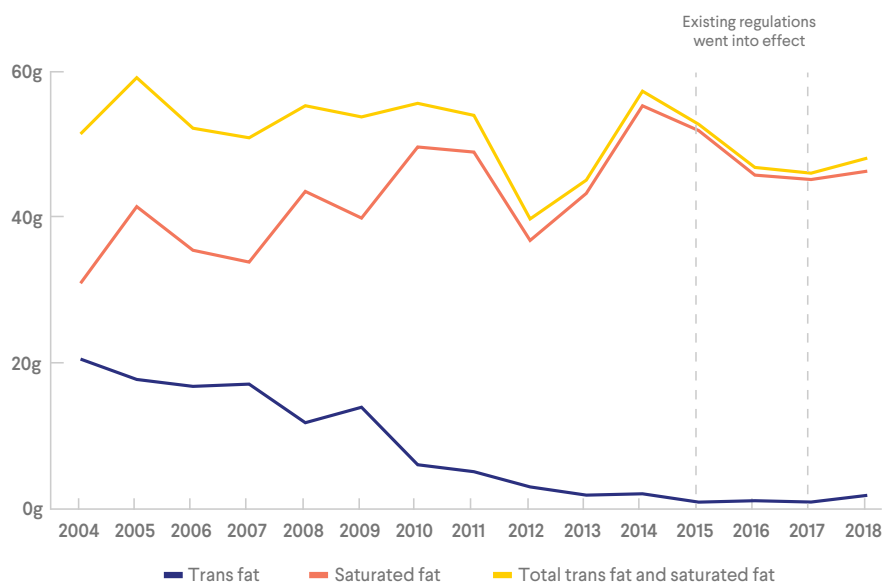


TABLE 1

Trans fats in grams per 100 grams of fats in various foods (2004 -2018)

	Namkeen	Biscuit	Bread	Cake	Cookie	Sauce	Dressing	Pizza	Burger	Ice cream	Mayonnaise	Sweet	Papad	Samosa	Dip	Fan	Muffin	Rusk	Bread pakoda	Sandwich	Veg roll
Sample size	114	91	25	23	21	17	16	14	13	11	10	10	10	10	7	6	4	2	2	2	2
Average	0.3	4.8	0.8	1.4	1.4	0.4	0.6	1.0	0.5	0.9	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.9	1.1	4.2	1.2	1.2	0.6	0.3	1.5
Range	0 - 4.8	0.1- 7.9	0 - 6.8	0 - 4.7	0 - 2.3	0 - 1.5	0 - 2.6	0 - 3.0	0 - 1.1	0 - 2.1	0 - 0.4	0 - 0.9	0 - 0.7	0.1- 1.5	0 - 3.5	3.5- 7.1	0 - 3.5	1.1- 1.2	0.5- 0.8	0.3- 0.4	1.4- 1.6

Highlighted values exceed global recommended maximum of 2g trans fat per 100g