

TRANS FAT ELIMINATION

Reasons for Policy Action Now

Artificial trans fat is a man-made compound still used in some countries as a substitute for butter or lard in fried food, deep-fried food, baked goods and spreads.

- Trans fat has been estimated to cause more than 500,000 deaths per year worldwide¹
- Trans fat can be eliminated and replaced with healthier alternatives, and many governments have already successfully protected their people. But protection from trans fat has mostly been for people living in wealthy countries.
- Since all people, in all countries, must be protected from the risks of trans fat consumption, the World Health Organization has called for global elimination of artificial trans fat by 2023 with the REPLACE initiative.



Over 40% of the world's population is currently protected by mandatory trans fat (TFA) limits.



Momentum for trans fat elimination is growing, and mandatory trans fat limits or bans on partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) are currently in effect for 3.2 billion people in 58 countries.²

- Between April 2019, and July 2022, 34 countries enacted best practice trans fat policies; as of July 2022, 30 of these are already in effect.
- Approximately 40% of people in the world are covered by best practice policies. The remaining 60% are still not fully covered by any mandatory trans fat limits or bans.
- Almost two-thirds of the 3.8 billion people living in low and middle-income countries are not fully protected as of July 2022.



Eliminating artificial trans fat is more important than ever.

In the context of COVID-19 and other health threats, eliminating trans fat will reduce the strain on overwhelmed health systems. Integrating trans fat elimination (and other nutrition policies) as a part of COVID-19 responses is a historic opportunity to tackle non-communicable diseases, including heart disease; support economic recovery from the pandemic; and increase health security by making future generations more resilient to infectious disease.³

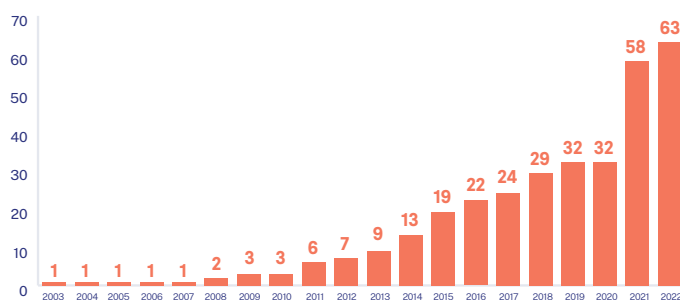
The most effective way to reduce trans fat in the food supply is through regulatory action^{4,5}

There are two best-practice policy models, and both fully protect people from artificial trans fat:

- Mandatory national restrictions that limit artificial trans fat to 2% of total fat content in all foods; OR
- Mandatory national bans on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) in all foods.⁶

Although voluntary and labeling approaches can lead to reductions in artificial trans fat, products containing artificial trans fat remain on the market and may be consumed in high quantities by some.^{4,7,8}

Countries with mandatory bans or limits on artificial trans fat



*As of July, 2022, 63 countries have passed mandatory bans or limits on artificial trans fats. 60 of these are currently in effect.

TRANS FAT ELIMINATION IS:

Life-saving: Global trans fat elimination will save an estimated 17.5 million lives over the next 25 years and prevent avoidable suffering.⁹

Cost-saving: Eliminating trans fat will reduce health care costs by preventing heart attacks, which require costly care.^{3,10}

Feasible: Artificial trans fat can be replaced in foods without changing taste or cost to the consumer.¹⁰ Healthier alternatives are already in use.¹¹

A step toward health equity: Eliminating trans fat can reduce inequalities in health, even in contexts with relatively low artificial trans fat intake.⁵

Practical: As more and more countries regulate trans fat, food manufacturers can reformulate products in the same way for sale in multiple countries, which can reduce R&D costs and allow for easier trade between countries and within regions. Additionally, manufacturers selling products containing artificial trans fat may shift to new markets where elimination policies are not in place. Implementing regulations before trans fat levels are high reduces future enforcement difficulty and cost.⁴

An investment in overall nutrition and food safety: Trans fat elimination is an opportunity to build regulatory systems that can be leveraged for food safety and for healthier foods.

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