

Artificial Trans Fat Limits: Not Just for Fats and Oils

Artificial trans fat is a toxic chemical still used in some countries as a substitute for butter or lard in spreads, fried and deep-fried food and baked goods. It clogs arteries and leads to heart attacks. Globally, artificial trans fat was estimated to cause 540,000 deaths every year, but it can be eliminated and replaced with healthier alternatives without changing the taste or cost of food. Through the REPLACE initiative, the World Health Organization aims to eliminate artificial trans fat from the global food supply by 2023.

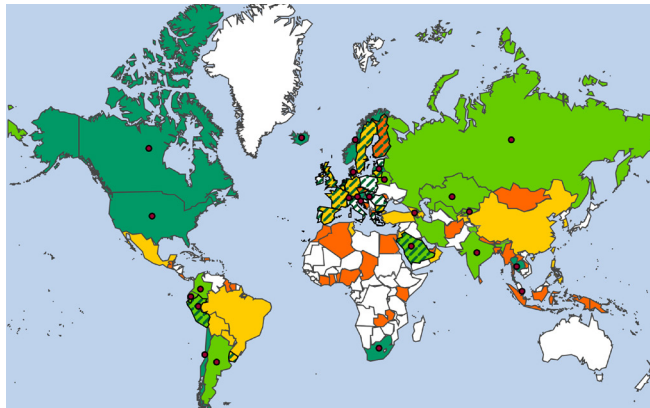
We can save 17 million lives over the next 25 years, but only with proven, effective trans fat elimination policies.

- The most effective way to reduce trans fat in the food supply is through regulatory action. Not all policies are equal.
- There are two best practice policy models, and either fully protects people from artificial trans fat:
 1. Mandatory national restrictions that limit artificial trans fat to 2% of total fat content **in all foods**; OR
 2. Mandatory national bans on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) **in all foods**.

Momentum for trans fat elimination has grown, and some form of mandatory trans fat limits or PHO bans are currently in effect for 2.4 billion people in 30 countries.

Only 12 countries—with 540 million people, just 7% of the population — have implemented best-practice trans fat elimination policies.

TRANS FAT POLICIES BY COUNTRY¹



- Best practice trans fat policy in effect for all settings
- Legislative measures to limit trans fat, but less effective than best practice policies
- Measures to encourage consumers to make healthier choices: trans fat or mandatory limits on trans fat in foods in specific settings
- Formal commitment to reduce trans fat in the food supply but no policy passed
- ▨ Best-practice trans fat policy passed but not yet in effect
- Monitoring mechanism for mandatory trans fat limits

‘Fat and oils only’ policies have serious limitations.

- A less effective policy considered in some countries limits trans fats to 2% of total fat only in oils and fats. This type of limit does not apply to foods, even those that may contain oils and fats. This is a subtle but important difference.
- If limits apply only to oils and fats, people remain vulnerable to the harms of trans fats because of:



BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SALES The regulations may be interpreted to apply only to fats and oils sold directly to consumers (e.g. cooking oils sold in markets). This means fats and oils sold to businesses (e.g. restaurants, food manufacturers and the food service industry) would not be covered (or, if they are covered, it would not be enforceable) so oils high in trans fat can be used in domestically-produced food products.



IMPORTED FOOD Since imported foods are manufactured in other countries that may not have trans fat limits in fats and oils, these harmful foods would be exempt from a fats and oils only regulation.



ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES When regulations apply to all foods, both end-products and oils sold business to business can be tested, allowing for a more effective compliance monitoring system. This means that countries can use a monitoring system most suitable to their situation, either by assessing products for compliance at the point of sale to consumers, or products upstream in the supply chain.



LACK OF INCENTIVES FOR DOMESTIC MANUFACTURERS When trans fat isn't regulated in all foods, and oils sold to businesses are exempt from regulations, domestic food producers don't have any incentive to use healthy oils and fats.

¹ The map is based on a country performance scorecard developed by WHO and data from the WHO Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) (<http://www.who.int/nutrition/gina/en/>) as of June 2019