

Pakistan Passes Landmark National Standard to Eliminate Trans Fats

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Langue Anglais

In a major public health victory, Pakistan officially adopted a comprehensive national standard that limits industrially produced trans fats (iTFA) to less than 2% of total fat across all food products. Passed by the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) in March 2025, the regulation aligns the country with the World Health Organization's (WHO) best-practice guidelines for eliminating harmful trans fats from the food supply.

iTFAs—commonly found in fried foods, Vanaspati ghee, and baked goods—are linked to an increased risk of coronary heart disease and death from all causes. The consumption of iTFA is estimated to contribute to more than 15,000 deaths in Pakistan annually, placing the country for iTFA-related deaths. This milestone regulation, effective March 25, 2025, marks a critical step forward in protecting public health and promoting healthier dietary habits nationwide.

Pakistan's journey toward comprehensive trans-fat regulation has been one of persistence and incremental progress. It began in June 2023 with standards passing for just six food categories, expanded significantly in September 2024 to cover 58 food categories, and culminated in March 2025 with the introduction of a single, unified standard covering all foods—aligning with global best practices.

Power in Partnership: How Strategic Collaboration Drove Policy Change

This policy achievement is the result of a strong coalition of dedicated advocates from local civil society organisations— including [Heartfile](#) [1], [NCD Alliance](#) [2], the Global Health Advocacy Incubator ([GHAI](#) [3]), the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives ([CPDI](#) [4]), and Pakistan Youth Change Advocates ([PYCA](#) [5]) — as well as the government, policymakers, and key actors, including the World Health Organization (WHO). Through strategic partnerships, technical engagement, and sustained advocacy, stakeholders successfully secured the approval of a WHO-recommended standard for all foods, strengthening Pakistan's regulatory framework on trans-fat reduction.

“A strong coalition of advocates played a pivotal role in achieving this accomplishment, demonstrating the power of collaboration and shared purpose. By aligning our efforts, leveraging diverse expertise and amplifying

a collective voice, we successfully drove the change.” -Dr. Saba Amjad, CEO of Heartfile, which is supported by NCD Alliance through its partnership with [Resolve to Save Lives](#) [6]

The new regulation places Pakistan among a growing list of global leaders taking decisive action against iTFAs. It strengthens the country’s position in the fight against diet-related diseases and supports the WHO’s target to eliminate industrial trans fats worldwide by 2025. This milestone demonstrates the power of evidence-based policymaking, collective action, and persistent advocacy in achieving transformative public health reforms

Next on the Agenda: Advocacy Towards a Nationwide Ban on Partially Hydrogenated Oils (PHOs)

Looking ahead, Heartfile and other advocates emphasise that simply regulating iTFA levels, though important, can still have loopholes with iTFAs finding its way into the Pakistani food supply, in the processed and informal food sectors (particularly by bakeries, frozen food makers, confectioneries and street vendors). This points towards the need to address regulatory loopholes by targeting the main source of trans-fat through banning PHOs.

Continued collaboration, rigorous enforcement, and industry cooperation will be vital to sustaining the progress and ensuring a healthier future for all Pakistanis.

About the authors:

Carmen Levis, MPH, RD, is the Nutrition Advocacy Consultant for the NCD Alliance, where she supports the advancement of iTFA elimination policies in Pakistan, Mexico, and Bangladesh, and coalition building and advocacy around sodium reduction and healthy school environments in Cameroon, Costa Rica and Nepal. She also contributes to global and national advocacy work specific to diet-related NCD prevention through engagement in Codex Alimentarius, the World Health Organization’s work on nutrition policy and other international processes.

Dr. Saba Amjad is a medical doctor with a master’s degree in Community Health and Nutrition, and extensive experience in public health. She currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Heartfile, where she leads the organization’s technical initiatives related to NCDs. With a strong background in healthcare systems and policy, Dr. Amjad plays a key role in advancing public health strategies focused on prevention and control of NCDs.

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