

5 countries recognised for their efforts to be Trans Fat Free in new WHO validation programme

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Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand are the first five countries to receive a validation certificate of Trans Fat Elimination in a new programme by the World Health Organization (WHO), which formally recognises countries that have eliminated industrially produced trans fats from their foods.

Dangerous to our health and feasible to remove from the food supply, the elimination of trans fats from our diets is one of the most straightforward and impactful nutrition policies a country can implement. And through a new certification scheme, WHO will now recognise countries that achieve the elimination of industrially-produced trans fats (iTFA), similar to their certification schemes for polio and smallpox eradication.

The countries who applied and were awarded the certificate in 2023 – Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand – have all demonstrated best-practice trans fat policy implementation, complete with systems to monitor and enforce the replacement of trans fats with healthier alternatives.

Trans fats, largely industrially-produced, have been added to our foods en masse since the 1960s to prolong supermarket shelf life and as an alternative to animal fats. But what we didn't know at the time is that they are lethal.

iTFAs are a major driver of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and stroke, and directly cause an estimated 540,000 deaths every year. They're also linked to a host of other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and related conditions such as ovarian cancer, infertility, endometriosis, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and obesity.

Since 2018, WHO has called for their total elimination from our food supply chain through [the REPLACE initiative](#) [1]. The REPLACE action package, encompassing evidence-based tools across six strategic areas, empowers governments to effectively eliminate this harmful additive from their national food supplies.

The good news is that iTFA can be replaced in foods without impacting their consistency, taste and cost, making iTFA elimination economically, politically, and technically feasible.

While some high-income countries in the USA and Europe had already been taking steps to reformulate foods and

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remove iTFAs, the REPLACE initiative has accelerated national responses across world regions with the support of [Resolve to Save Lives](#) [2] and in collaboration with other civil society organisations, including the [Global Health Advocacy Incubator](#) [3], NCD Alliance and national health advocates.

Substantial progress has been made since to remove iTFA from the global food supply, and [according to the WHO](#). [4] the objective of global elimination is close. Only five countries account for two thirds of the estimated remaining deaths due to iTFA – and 54% of the world population is now covered by mandatory iTFA limits.

The WHO will be opening up its second validation round, inviting a host of countries who already have the best practice policies in place to be recognised.

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[1] <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/replace-trans-fat>

[2] <https://resolvetosavelives.org/>

[3] <https://www.advocacyincubator.org/>

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