
Mexico to move forward towards elimination of industrially produced trans fatty acids (iTFA)

Language English

Industrially produced trans fatty acids (iTFA) are a toxin with no known health benefits, causing over half a million deaths per year. © Shutterstock

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) REPLACE Package, consumption of trans-fatty acids (TFAs) is a major cause of global morbidity and mortality. To reduce global consumption of TFAs, the WHO recommends that all countries eliminate industrially-produced TFA (iTFA) from their national food supply.

Last May 28, the Mexico Salud-Hable Coalition organised the Virtual Forum “*Public Policies towards the elimination of industrially-produced trans fatty acids in Mexico*”, co-hosted with Senator Lilia Valdez Martinez, member of the Senate’s Health Commission, and with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). The event was attended by high-level national health authorities, legislators, local and international civil society representatives, and PAHO health and nutrition experts.

The virtual meeting exposed the need for the country to move forward in eliminating iTFAs via a regulation to both ban partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) and limit to no more than 2 grams/100 grams (2%) of total **fat** in all food products. Such a regulation is particularly relevant as iTFA intake is a significant and preventable contributing factor to the burden of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the Americas. Mexico is among the fifteen countries with the highest burden of death linked to iTFA intake who has yet to promote this type of regulation in order to protect the health of its population. The advocacy work of the Mexico Salud-Hable Coalition, including the organization of this virtual forum, is supported by NCD Alliance, through its partnership with Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies.

Senator Valdez provided the opening remarks by highlighting that discussions at this convening should be translated into important and concrete measures, as iTFAs are harmful for the health of the population, thus all food products manufactured, sold and cooked in the country should be iTFA free. On his part, Dr. Ruy López Ridaura, Director General of CENAPRECE, the National Centre of Prevention and Control of NCD at the Secretary of Health, agreed with Sen Valdez concluding that a reform to the General Health Law including iTFA elimination could allow Mexico to have a regulatory framework to ban the sale or import of industrially-produced trans fatty acids.

In line with what was exposed by the Mexican decision-makers, Mr. Cristian Morales Fuhrmann, PAHO representative in Mexico, and Dr. Fabio Da Silva Gomes, Nutrition Advisor at PAHO in Washington D.C., encouraged Mexico to adopt measures to ban iTFAs, emphasising the importance of legislators to have the political will to promote this regulation as it would imply a cost-effective measure to protect population health.

Eliminating iTFAs are a much-needed measure to strengthen nutrition policies in light of COVID-19. Hence, Lorena Allemandi, consultant at the NCD Alliance presented the report [“Trans Fat Free 2023: a building block in the COVID response”](#) [1]. One of the key messages of this report is that COVID-19 is deeply linked to NCDs and share many risk factors, that both the NCD burden and vulnerability to infectious diseases could be reduced by effective policy measures promoting healthier diets, and that one of the most straight-forward nutrition policies is the elimination of iTFA from the global food supply.

Dr. Patricio Ortiz Fernández, Chief of Hospitalization at the National Institute of Cardiology stated that in Mexico, cardiovascular diseases double deaths from cancer and an urgent iTFA regulation is crucial to fight the NCD pandemic.

Erick Antonio Ochoa, member of the Mexico Salud-Hable Coalition mentioned that there could be different policy paths to regulate iTFAs in the country. The main being a potential reform to the General Health Law that could be complemented by other specific measures that are being considered within the Secretary of Health. The national NCD alliance is already advocating for these policy paths with key decision makers at all government levels and with Congress.

Finally, Dr. Víctor Villalobos Daniel, consultant for PAHO in Mexico, presented the communication campaign that has the objective of gathering support to regulate iTFA. The campaign includes 6 videos selected out of a total of 25 to support relevant actors in the political process.

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Related links:

[Transmission of the Virtual Forum: “Políticas Públicas para la eliminación de las grasas trans de producción industrial en México”](#). [2]

[Mexico Salud Hable press release](#) [3]

[PAHO press release](#) [4]

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[1] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/trans-fat-free-by-2023-a-building-block-of-the-covid-19-response>

[2] <https://www.facebook.com/SaludJustaMx/videos/261104632476579>

[3] <https://mexicosaludhable.org/2021/05/29/legisladores-especialistas-y-organizaciones-sociales-proponen-eliminar-grasas-trans-en-mexico/>

[4] <https://www.paho.org/es/noticias/29-5-2021-ops-mexico-se-une-legisladores-autoridades-sanitarias-organizaciones-sociales>

[5] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/97>

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