

What works to eliminate trans fats from the food supply?

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

Industrially produced trans-fatty acids (TFAs) have no known health benefits and are common in baked goods, pre-packaged foods and some cooking oils. Twenty-four mostly high-income countries have regulated industrially produced TFAs, but many have not yet acted despite their major contribution to cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and NCDs: it is estimated that TFAs contribute to over half a million deaths globally every year.

To promote the elimination of TFAs from the food supply, NCD Alliance and its partner [Resolve to Save Lives](#) [1] (an initiative of Vital Strategies) hosted a roundtable on 28 January 2019 in Geneva. Dr Francesco Branca, Director of WHO's Department of Nutrition, presented [WHO's REPLACE package](#) [2], developed to support countries in eliminating TFAs from the food supply by 2023.

Industrially produced TFAs are a toxin that can be replaced in foods without impacting their consistency and taste

Experts presented on the TFA elimination policies of Argentina, Canada and Denmark, discussed the role of academia and civil society, and highlighted some challenges faced by governments interested in implementing TFA regulations and potential solutions.

Main learnings

- Civil society organisations play an important role informing the public, providing support for draft legislation/regulation and monitoring implementation. Academics are crucial to provide the necessary evidence for action on TFAs.
- TFA reduction is valuable in all countries, even in those with low average daily intake of TFAs, as there are population subgroups who are at risk of high TFA intake if foods high in TFAs (such as fast foods) are popular.

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- Small and medium sized producers of oil, fat and food often lack the capacity and know-how to replace TFAs; TFA elimination policies should take this into account (e.g. long enough transition periods, technical support).
- Implementation and enforcement, as well as trade and investment considerations, need to be taken into account when drafting TFA policies, and the policy process needs to be well documented. This ensures that implementation of a TFA ban or limit will minimise challenges.
- Voluntary TFA targets in food do not work – mandatory limits or bans have to be set.
- Countries lacking capacity to monitor implementation of policies could come together to create regional labs to support their efforts.

[Learn more](#) [3]

Read the full recap report from the roundtable [here](#) [4].

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Links

[1] <https://www.resolvetosavelives.org/>

[2] <https://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/replace-transfat>

[3] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/ncd-alliance-and-resolve-to-save-lives-partner-to-eliminate-trans-fatty-acids>

[4] https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/Report_RT%20TFAs_Geneva%2028%20Jan%202019_updated.pdf

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

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