FSSAI plans to limit transfats in oil to 2% by 2022  Shambhavi Anand

India’s food regulator has proposed to limit the maximum amount of transfat content in vegetable oils, vegetable fat and hydrogenated vegetable oil to 2 per cent by weight as part of its goal to make India transfat-free by 2022.

“We are in discussions with the industry to persuade them to reduce the amount of trans fatty acids in edible oil,” said Pawan Kumar Agarwal, chief executive officer of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. “We are conducting various studies and getting opinions of medical experts on whether this needs to be further reduced.”

The current permitted level of transfat is 5 per cent in India. The World Health Organisation has urged governments across the world to eliminate the use of trans fats from global food supplies by 2023. “We have taken steps towards this even before WHO’s announcement,” Agarwal added. However, this may take some time, he added.

Transfatty acids are made through hydrogenation of oils, which solidifies them. They help to increase the shelf life of oils and foods and stabilise their flavours. Trans fats can be found in food and food products such as some margarines, crackers, biscuits, snack foods and french fries.
In 2015, the food regulator set the maximum level of transfatty acids at 5 per cent in food products from 10 per cent earlier. It directed that the level of transfats in food products must be disclosed on the label.

Transfats are known to raise the level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, or the ‘bad’ cholesterol, in the blood and increase the risk of coronary artery heart disease and stroke.