



FSSAI to limit trans fat in vanaspati/margarine to below 2 pc in phased manner

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Food safety regulator FSSAI today said it has decided to bring down the trans-fatty acids (TFA) in vanaspati/bakery shortenings/margarine to less than 2 per cent in a phased manner, which would effectively bring the level of trans fats to zero level in food in India.

Since the industry has agreed on the issue, the regulator said it will soon notify a draft regulation and release the final one in the next 3-4 months, it said.

TFA are largely present in vanaspati (used in preparation of sweets and deep fried foods) and margarine and bakery shortenings. Trans-fatty acids are also formed during repeated heating of fats/oils while deep frying at home and restaurants.

"We are planning to achieve less than 2 per cent TFA content by 2022, a year ahead of the global target to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fat from the food supply by the year 2023," Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO Pawan Agarwal said in a statement.

TFA reduction in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVOs) from 5 per cent to 2 per cent will be carried out in a phased manner by the industry, he said.

He hoped that this initiative will drive the market for trans-fat free products in the future.

Many countries around the world, such as Denmark, Chile, Norway, Singapore, South Africa and Equador already limit trans-fat in all foods to 2 per cent, while a few other countries such as Austria, Hungary and Latvia limit it to 2 per cent level with some exceptions.

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Research has shown that higher intakes of trans-fatty acids is associated with increased risk of high cholesterol and heart diseases.

Trans fatty acids can be easily eliminated by adopting newer technologies which allow use of healthier oils in place of partially hydrogenated vegetable oils at negligible costs.

Recently, the UN body World Health Organisation (WHO) has given a call to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fats from the food supply by 2023 and has released an action package 'REPLACE' for the same.

Industrially produced trans-fatty acids are bad fats, created artificially during hydrogenation processes while making PHVOs, which are the major source of trans-fatty acids in India.