

## **FSSAI's new policy limits industrial trans fats to 2% in all food items by Jan 2022**

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**Our Bureau, Mumbai**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has stated that all food items should contain less than 2 per cent of trans fat from Jan 2022. On December 31, 2020, the food standards authority notified rules that trans fats in oil and fats used for processing food should contain 3 per cent or less trans fats by January 2021, and 2 per cent or less trans fats by January 2022. This has potential for India to be one of the few countries that has successfully ratified the international standards of food safety set by the World Health Organization (WHO) that has called for global elimination of trans fat by 2023.

Emulsions such as margarine and shortening are the most common fats used in baked goods such as cakes, pastries, and puffs, and branded and unbranded processed foods such as chips, biscuits, and other snack items. Some trans fats are also formed during the manufacturing process when a high temperature refinement process is used to create vegetable oils.

Consumption of industrially trans fats is associated with increased risk of heart diseases. It is estimated that the 2017 global market volume of partially hydrogenated oils – the main source of industrially produced trans-fatty acids in food – was approximately 13.6 million tonnes. Eliminating industrially produced trans-fatty acids can save 17 million lives over the next 25 years. Experts believe that regulation and enforcement are the only ways to remove this toxic ingredient from the supply.

Saroja S, Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group, Chennai, said, Consumer organisations working with the food safety officers and food producer groups in the states have welcomed the new notification. "CAG has been working with the state food safety department to strengthen the ground-level understanding of effects of trans fat consumption and for effective implementation of the regulations. We have also been urging food business operators to bring about clarity in food labels about trans fat content; further, we have been spreading awareness among consumers and encouraging them to read and understand food labels better. These regulations will help us successfully implement best practices followed by several nations in controlling death and debilitation caused by non-communicable diseases."

In the month of February, CAG organised a multi-stakeholder in collaboration with SINAM at Thiruvannamalai district with Food Safety Department, Food Business

Operators, Cardiologist, Nutritionist and Civil Society Organisations. Dr Senthil Kumar, designated officer, Thiruvanamalai District, said, "FSSAI's new regulation on reducing trans fat to less than 2 per cent in foods has come up mainly to safeguard people from the non-communicable diseases as the trans fat consumption affects people only through food."

India has the highest burden of heart disease deaths due to high trans fat intake out of all countries in the world. More than 1.5 million deaths each year due to coronary heart disease, and nearly 5 per cent of these deaths each year (71,000) can be attributed to trans fats intake.

Vandana Shah, regional director, South Asia Programmes, Global Health Advocacy Incubator, said, "The two recent regulations limiting trans fats to below 2 per cent make India a global and regional leader on the issue."

According to WHO's REPLACE second annual report released in September 2020, around 40 countries have enacted the best practice policies that limit industrially produced levels of trans fats to 2 per cent or less of total fats in all foods.