



# COUNTDOWN TO 2023:

WHO REPORT ON GLOBAL TRANS FAT ELIMINATION 2019



World Health  
Organization



**REPLACE**  
TRANS FAT



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Countdown to 2023: WHO report on global trans-fat elimination 2019

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Special thanks are due to Member States which are committed and are taking concrete actions to achieve the global target of TFA elimination by 2023.



## FOREWORD

### COUNTDOWN TO 2023: WHO REPORT ON GLOBAL TRANS FAT ELIMINATION 2019

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the world's leading cause of death. In 2016, they were responsible for almost 40 million deaths, which is approximately three quarters of all deaths. Cardiovascular disease was the main killer, accounting for nearly half of all NCD deaths. Many of these deaths were in people under the age of 70 years, and most occurred in low- and middle-income countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) is committed to supporting countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal objective of reducing premature deaths from NCDs by one third by 2030.

Cardiovascular diseases are largely preventable by eliminating tobacco use and harmful use of alcohol, adopting a healthy diet, and being physically active. Industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) cause heart disease and death. They are not necessary in food

and can be eliminated. Industrially produced TFA are used in baked and fried foods, pre-packaged snacks, and certain cooking oils and fats that are used at home, in restaurants and in street food.

TFA are estimated to be responsible for more than half a million deaths around the world each year – mostly in low- and middle-income countries. Elimination of industrially produced TFA from food is feasible, and some countries are taking action, although until recently this has been mostly in wealthy countries. Efforts need to move beyond high-income countries so that everyone can benefit from TFA elimination.

Elimination of industrially produced TFA from food is a WHO priority and a target in the 13th General Programme of Work, which will guide WHO's work through 2023. WHO launched the REPLACE action package in May 2018 to help governments eliminate TFA from their nations' food supplies, and replace these harmful compounds with healthier oils and fats.

One year later, it is encouraging to see the progress countries have made in the elimination of TFA from their food supplies. But much more needs to be done to eliminate industrially produced TFA from the entire global food supply by 2023, so that no child born anywhere in the world will be exposed to these harmful and unnecessary compounds.

**Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**  
Director-General  
World Health Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Intake of *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) is associated with increased risk of heart attack and death from heart disease (WHO, 2018b). TFA intake is estimated to be responsible for more than half a million deaths from coronary heart disease each year around the world (Wang et al., 2016). Replacing industrially produced TFA with healthier oils and fats is feasible without changing the taste of food or its cost to the consumer.

In May 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the REPLACE action package to support governments to eliminate industrially produced TFA from the global food supply by 2023. The package calls for replacement of TFA with healthier oils and fats, to be achieved through policy and regulation, while establishing monitoring systems and creating awareness among policy-makers, industry and the public.

Momentum around TFA elimination has been growing as more countries begin to take action by adopting and enforcing policies. Mandatory TFA limits or bans on partially hydrogenated oils are currently in effect for 2.4 billion people in 28 Member States (31% global population coverage). Since the beginning of 2018, mandatory TFA limits have come into effect in six additional countries and have been passed in 24 additional countries. Some multinational companies have committed, and taken steps, to eliminate industrially produced TFA from global product lines.

Although this progress is encouraging, the vast majority of countries still do not have policies in place to protect their citizens from the harmful effects of TFA. Therefore, there is still a long way to go to achieve global elimination by 2023. To meet this target, WHO will strengthen its support to countries in eliminating TFA and overcoming any challenges they may be facing, including by developing and providing regulatory capacity-building training.

WHO also recommends that the following actions be taken by countries to create a global movement on TFA elimination.

- Develop and implement mandatory TFA limits.
- Share experiences and best practices in TFA elimination, and consider regional or intercountry networks to enhance actions.
- Renew support and strengthen commitment for eliminating industrially produced TFA by 2023 to achieve the first elimination of a risk factor for noncommunicable disease.

Actions are also required by countries and other concerned stakeholders to ensure that the world is free from industrially produced TFA by 2023. WHO expects the industry groups to implement the firm commitments they have made to eliminate industrially produced TFA from product lines.





## I. INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular disease is the leading killer globally, causing more than 18 million deaths every year. Elimination of industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) is a target that is within reach and can have large-scale impact in preventing heart disease. Half a million people die each year because of TFA in their food. Just 10 countries make up 80% of the burden in low- and middle-income countries (Wang et al., 2016) (Fig. 1). Replacing industrially produced TFA with healthier oils and fats is feasible and cost-effective, and will save lives.

TFA elimination is increasingly becoming a priority across the globe. Following the first national policy to eliminate industrially produced TFA in Denmark in 2003, a

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