

A celebratory occasion: Mexico's law for the elimination of industrially-produced trans fatty acids enters into force

Submitted by bdesantiago on 2 October, 2023 - 10:16

Language English



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On Wednesday 20 September, we celebrated a fundamental achievement for the protection of public health in Mexico. The Decree that adds Article 216 Bis to Mexico's General Health Law entered into force, limiting industrially-produced trans fatty acids (iTFA) to a maximum of 2% total fat and specifying that partially hydrogenated oils, the main source of iTFA, are now banned from all food and drinks in Mexico's food supply.

iTFAs provide no benefits and have several known health implications, causing approximately 500, 000 deaths per year globally, with 160,000 occurring in the PAHO region and [20,000 taking place in Mexico](#) [1].

A forum to celebrate the monumental occasion was organized by Mexican civil society—the México SaludHable coalition and the Salud Justa team—where representatives from the national Congress, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and civil society organizations were convened to make a pronouncement that encourages the implementation of the reform and its health benefits, by prohibiting the use of iTFA in food production.

This achievement was years in the making, as the México SaludHable coalition has led the campaign to eliminate iTFA from the Mexican food supply since 2020, along with collaborative efforts from different key actors, and support from the NCD Alliance through its partnership with Resolve to Save Lives.

Mexico now joins a handful of other countries within the Region of the Americas that have enacted a best-practice iTFA elimination policy: banning partially hydrogenated oils from the food chain and/or limiting iTFA content in all food and beverages to 2% of total fat, including Brazil, Canada, Chile, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay, with Argentina and Paraguay's iTFA policies set to come into effect in 2024.

Advancements since the Decree's publication in the Federal Registry

The decree was set to enter into force 180 days (approximately six months) after its publication in the Official Gazette on 24 March 2023. During this time, the Ministry of Health and the Federal Commission for Protection against Health Risks (COFEPRIS) have been leading the establishment of the guidelines for regulating the use of iTFAs in food processing, with support from the México SaludHable coalition and the Salud Justa team.

On 7 and 8 August 2023, representatives of COFEPRIS participated in a multi-day workshop, led by PAHO, along with experts from Resolve to Save Lives and the World Health Organization, to further develop Mexico's iTFA regulatory proposal, including a roadmap to enact the regulatory mechanisms.

México Saludhable and Salud Justa MX have been fundamental in coordinating actions to establish the implementation of the reform to the General Health Law, including organizing meetings with international and national partners to obtain technical guidance on the matter. Additionally, throughout September, México SaludHable and the Salud Justa team have been leading a social media campaign to raise awareness and celebrate the Decree to reform the General Health Law's entry into force, with support from the government, allies in Congress and the NCD Alliance. The campaign continues to inform the public about the importance of eliminating iTFAs and outlines the new legal and regulatory provisions.

Next steps: Implementation of Mexico's amended General Health Law

With the reform to the General Health Law now in effect, governmental institutions are responsible for enforcing the rules outlined in the Article: "oils, edible fats, food and non-alcoholic beverages may not contain partially hydrogenated oils", with a limit of no more than two parts of iTFA for every 100 parts of total fat.

However, given the absence of a defined implementation plan at this time, Mexico SaludHable and Salud Justa Mexico, in collaboration with international and regional organizations, national public institutions, and political actors, are encouraging the government to finalize and present the scope of the entry into force of the Decree that adds Article 216 Bis to the General Health Law.

The ongoing support of civil society to advance the implementation of the reformed law and ensure that articles are complied with was highlighted at the aforementioned forum by Erick Antonio Ochoa, member of the Mexico SaludHable Coalition and Director of Salud Justa Mexico:

"We will continue the process of implementing the ban on the use of trans fats and will denounce interference by industries that produce harmful products, which only care about their profits without regard to harm to health."

[México Saludhable, Salud Justa](#) [2] and NCD Alliance will provide updates regarding implementation details when further information is disclosed.

About the authors:

Carmen Levis is the Nutrition Advocacy Consultant for the NCD Alliance, where she supports the advancement of iTFA elimination policies in Mexico and Pakistan and contributes to global and national advocacy work specific to diet-related NCD prevention. She also works for the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) as an international nutrition policy consultant, where she helps strengthen the capacity of PAHO's 35 member countries to advance nutrition policies, including food marketing restrictions, front-of-package labelling and sugar-sweetened beverage taxation. Additionally, Carmen is a member of the Executive Committee of the World Public Health Nutrition Association and currently resides in Canada.

Erick Antonio Ochoa ([@eantoniochoa](#) [3]) is currently the director of Salud Justa Mx and co-coordinator of the México Saludhable Coalition ([@MxSaludHable](#) [4]). He is the former Director of Initiatives for Tobacco Control of the Inter-American Heart Foundation Mexico (2010 to 2019). He has presented papers on tobacco control policies in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru and Uruguay. He has also held various positions within the Mexican government. Erick was recently the recipient of the 2023 Judy Wilkenfeld Award for International Tobacco Control Excellence for his significant contributions to the fight against tobacco use, and Salud Justa MX received one of the World Health Organization's World No Tobacco Day 2023 awards for their contributions to tobacco control in Mexico.

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Published on NCD Alliance (<https://ncdalliance.org>)

Born in Chiapas, Mexico, Erick has a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Iztapalapa and a master's degree in Administration and Public Policy from the Center for Economic Research and Teaching.

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- [1] <https://www.gob.mx/salud/prensa/031-secretaria-de-salud-celebra-modificaciones-legales-para-eliminar-grasas-trans-del-sistema-alimentario>
- [2] <https://saludjusta.mx/>
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