
Steps taken to eliminate TFA in Pakistan

Resolve to Save Lives

Industrially-produced TFA is a component found in many foods that significantly increases heart disease risk. It is responsible for over 500,000 premature deaths worldwide every year. The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for its global elimination from the food system by 2023.

Heartfile, an NGO based in Islamabad, has been working on TFA elimination in Pakistan since 2018. Pakistan's TFA intake is estimated to be the 2nd highest in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region (after Egypt). The main dietary sources of TFA include vanaspati (vegetable) ghee, margarines, bakery shortenings and cooking oil, mostly produced domestically and used widely by the food industry and in home cooking and baking.

Pakistan has taken some initiatives toward eliminating TFA by introducing a national TFA limit for vanaspati ghee and a provincial TFA limit for certain foods in Punjab. However, they do not conform with WHO recommendations (max. 2g TFA per 100g fat/oil for all food products).

Pakistan's trans fat consumption is estimated to be the 2nd highest in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region. Some provinces have regulations to eliminate this deadly fat, but national legislation is a high priority to protect the entire population.

Key steps to achieve TFA elimination in Pakistan include, amongst others, the adoption of a national mandatory standard in line with WHO recommendations together with a clear definition of federal and provincial food regulatory responsibilities and effective enforcement mechanisms.

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