

ESC statement on trans fatty acids

July 8 2015

The American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers trans fatty acids (TFA) unsafe for consumption. The FDA is providing a three-year compliance period to allow industry to gradually phase out their use in processed food. This step is expected to reduce cardiovascular disease and prevent thousands of fatal heart attacks every year in the US.

The European Society of Cardiology welcomes the FDA decision "to remove artificial trans fat from the [food supply](#)" (1) and calls upon European policy makers to urgently bring forward EU-wide regulation to address this important health issue.

TFAs are widely recognized as the most harmful fat with regard to causing [cardiovascular disease](#) (CVD). Partially hydrogenated oils are the major source of artificial trans fats in the food supply. They are the most often used source of fat in commercial bakery products. TFAs raise the level of LDL ("bad") cholesterol in the blood. An elevated LDL cholesterol level in the blood increases the risk of developing heart disease. The detrimental effects of TFAs on heart health and mortality are now beyond dispute (2,3).

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the main cause of death in Europe. Each year CVD causes over 4 million deaths in Europe and over 1.9 million deaths in the EU. CVD causes 47% of all deaths in Europe and 40% of deaths in the EU (4). There are very significant differences in mortality rates between countries. The current TFA intake in Eastern and South Eastern Europe is often high, increasing the European CVD burden and widening national and international inequalities.

Based on the effects on cardiovascular health of TFA intake, the positive experiences from different interventions to limit TFA intake and the accumulated knowledge on differential consumption of TFA across Europe, the European Society of Cardiology believes that a regulatory intervention is necessary to ensure that all EU citizens can effectively reduce their TFA intake

For the full European Society of Cardiology position on [trans fatty acids](#), please refer to our 2014 paper on Industrial Trans Fatty Acids (5). The European Chronic Disease Alliance (of which the European Society of Cardiology is part) has also issued a policy document (6).

More information: References:

- 1) FDA Announcement www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm372915.htm
- 2) Brouwer et al, Eur J Clin Nutr 2013
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23531781
- 3) Kiage et al, Am J Clin Nutr 2013
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23553155
- 4) CVD Statistics www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Initiatives/Initiative-Statistics
- 5) ESC Position Paper on Industrial Trans Fatty Acids (2014)
www.escardio.org/static_file/Escardio-Position-Paper-on-TFA.pdf
- 6) European Chronic Disease Alliance position on the need for EU regulation to set upper limits for industrially produced trans fats (2015)
www.alliancechronicdiseases.org/alliancechronicdiseases.org/ocsforsite/pdfs/ECDA-Position-Paper-on-TFA-final-April-2015.pdf

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