

Action needed to set legal limits on trans fats in food

December 4 2015

On 3 December, the European Commission adopted a report on trans fats (TFA) in food and in the overall diet of Europeans. Based on JRC input, it suggests that setting a legal limit for industrial TFA content would be the most effective measure in terms of public health, consumer protection and compatibility with the single market. However, the implementation of such a limit would require further investigation.

This Commission [report](#) builds upon literature reviews and data gathered, analysed and summarised by the JRC, as well as extensive consultation with national authorities and relevant stakeholders. The research focused on the presence of [trans fatty acids](#) in the [food](#) and diets of the EU population, as well as on the possible impacts of different policy options aiming to reduce the TFA intake in the EU.

The most recent JRC report, 'Trans fatty acids in Europe: where do we stand?', indicates that the majority of food products analysed in the EU contain levels of TFA that are below 2 grams of trans fats per 100 grams of fat (i.e. the limit specified by some EU countries where legislation to limit TFA content in foods is in place). However, the report also shows that there are still a number of foods with high levels of TFA (above 2 g TFA per 100 g of fat) in some European food markets. Results gathered from dietary surveys and consultations also indicate that the average daily intake of TFA is below 1% of the daily energy intake in 9 EU countries for which the data was available. However, there are subpopulations exceeding this recommended threshold. Indeed, specific population groups may be at risk of high TFA intake as long as products

with high levels of TFA are sold on the European food market and they or their labelling are not regulated by EU legislation.

The Commission report analyses the potential effectiveness of different measures that could be adopted at EU level to protect consumers' health while limiting the burden on food producers. The options that were investigated included mandatory labelling of TFA, setting legal limits of TFA content in food and voluntary industry agreements to reduce [trans fats](#) in food at EU level. So far, TFA labelling is not well understood by consumers and it increases the complexity of identifying healthier food choices. The effectiveness of voluntary industry agreements could be limited as it would depend on the extent of industry participation and the coverage of food products on the market. The Commission will soon launch a public consultation and carry out a full impact assessment to collect more information and build upon the analysis provided by today's report. This process will inform future policy decisions.

More information: Factsheet on trans fats in food:
ec.europa.eu/food/safety/docs/..._ats-factsheet_en.pdf

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council regarding trans fats in foods and in the overall diet of the Union population

ec.europa.eu/food/safety/docs/..._s-fats-report_en.pdf

JRC report 'Trans fatty acids in Europe: where do we stand?'

ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publicatio..._pe-where-do-we-stand

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