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# Trans fat elimination

communications toolkit



# Why take action

Consumption of trans fat or *trans*-fatty acids (TFA) increases the risk of heart attacks and death from coronary heart disease. Industrially produced trans fat is used in baked and fried foods, pre-packaged snacks, and certain cooking oils and fats used at home, in restaurants or in street food.

WHO launched the REPLACE initiative to eliminate industrially produced trans fat from the global food supply in May 2018. Though significant progress has been made, billions of people worldwide remain unprotected from artificial trans fat. Much more needs to be done.

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## About the toolkit

WHO and [Resolve to Save Lives](#), a not-for-profit organization that aims to prevent 100 million deaths from cardiovascular disease, collaborated to develop this toolkit to support communications and advocacy activities to accelerate adoption of trans fat elimination policies. The materials can be customized to suit various audiences and contexts.



# Key messages

## Trans fat kills

- Trans fat is a harmful compound—used in foods including fried foods, margarine, and commercial baked goods—that increases the risk of heart attack and death.
- Every day, millions of people consume trans fat without knowing it.
- Trans fat increases bad “LDL” cholesterol, which clogs the arteries in your heart.
- Every year, more than 278,000 people die because of trans fat consumption. That’s about one person every two minutes.

## Trans fat can be eliminated

- The use of trans fat is unnecessary—it was only invented in the 20th century and is not traditionally part of any cuisine.
- Trans fat can be replaced with healthier alternatives.
- Replacing trans fat doesn’t have to change the taste of food or how much it costs the consumer.
- The World Health Organization calls for the global elimination of industrially produced trans fat by 2025 with the REPLACE initiative.
- The most effective way to reduce trans fat in the food supply is through regulatory action.
- There are two types of best-practice trans fat elimination policies: mandatory restrictions that limit industrially produced trans fat to 2% of total fat content in all foods, and mandatory national bans on partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) in all foods.
- Many governments have already successfully protected their people.

## Eliminating trans fat is a win for governments

- Eliminating trans fat worldwide would prevent more than 278,000 deaths each year—saving lives, preventing suffering, and protecting economic productivity.
- Global trans fat elimination would save an estimated 17.5 million lives by 2040.
- Eliminating trans fat reduces health care costs by preventing heart attacks, which require costly care.
- Studies in Kenya, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Argentina, and Denmark have shown that trans fat regulations save lives and are cost-saving to governments.
- As trans fat restrictions increase worldwide, food manufacturers may “dump” products with trans fat in remaining markets without regulations. Governments can protect their people by implementing regulations, even if trans fat levels are estimated to be low.
- Governments have a responsibility to their people to provide a healthy food environment—which means eliminating harmful food additives like trans fat.





## Eliminating trans fat makes sense for the food industry

- As more and more countries regulate trans fat, food manufacturers can reformulate products for sale in multiple countries, reducing R&D costs and allowing for easier trade between countries and within regions.
- Several large international companies—Cargill and members of the International Food and Beverage Association— have voluntarily committed to eliminate trans fat.
- Food manufacturers that have profited from products containing deadly trans fat have a responsibility to consumers to invest in healthier replacements.
- Regulatory change in areas with lower trans fat burdens will help to create a level playing field and cement the achievements made by many manufacturers in reducing trans fats in foods.

## A trans fat free world is within reach

- The number of countries taking action is accelerating rapidly.
- Best practice limits or bans on trans fats are currently in effect in 53 countries, covering 3.7 billion people (or 46% of the world's population).
- Accelerating action to achieve best-practice policies in the countries with the highest mortality burden associated to trans fat (Azerbaijan, China, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Morocco, Pakistan and Russian Federation) would get the world closer to eliminating 90% of the global trans fat burden.
- Every government can stop these preventable deaths by passing a best-practice policy now.

# Cost-effective policy

Reformulation policies for healthier food and beverage products, including elimination of trans fat, are one of the most cost-effective and feasible policies to address noncommunicable diseases. In 2023, the World Health Assembly included them in 'best buys to tackle noncommunicable diseases'. Cost-effectiveness was established by comparing estimated impact against costs of implementing the intervention.

The costs include the key activities required to prepare, develop, implement, monitor, enforce and evaluate a policy (e.g. human resource needs, training, public education campaigns and surveillance).

Introducing best-practice policies for trans fat elimination can have significant health and economic benefit in all settings, even where populations have low trans fats intake.

Member States and private sector can draw on the experience from other countries to eliminate trans fats for good.

table 1

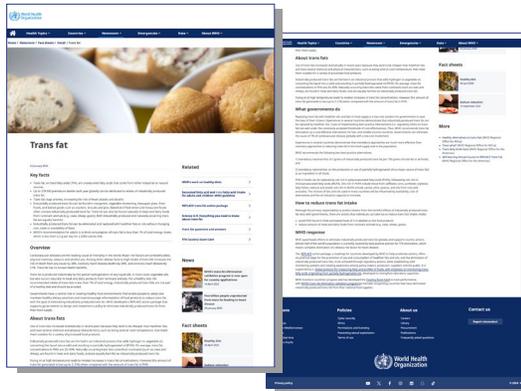
Country	Assessed action	Health benefits	Economic benefits
<u>Denmark</u> *	WHO best practice policies for trans fat elimination	Reduction of deaths attributable to cardiovascular disease by an estimated 14.2 deaths per 100,000 people per year	
<u>New York , United States of America</u> *	WHO best practice policies for trans fat elimination	Reduction of deaths attributable to cardiovascular disease by an estimated 13 deaths per 100,000 people per year	
<u>Kenya</u>	WHO best practice policies for trans fat elimination	Potential to save 50,000 lives and prevent over 100,000 new cases of heart disease over the population lifetime	Healthcare cost savings estimated at US\$20 per US\$1 invested, amounting to US\$270 million potential savings
<u>England and Wales, United Kingdom</u>	Elimination of industrial TFA to less than 0.4% of daily energy	1600 fewer deaths per year; 4000 fewer hospital admissions	Potential to save 100 million GBP in direct healthcare costs over 10 years

\* Denmark and New York, United States of America, were the first to introduce best-practice policies for trans-fat elimination and impact evaluations have been performed in these settings. The other data presented are based on modelling studies of potential policy impact if such a policy were introduced.

# Fact sheets and statistics

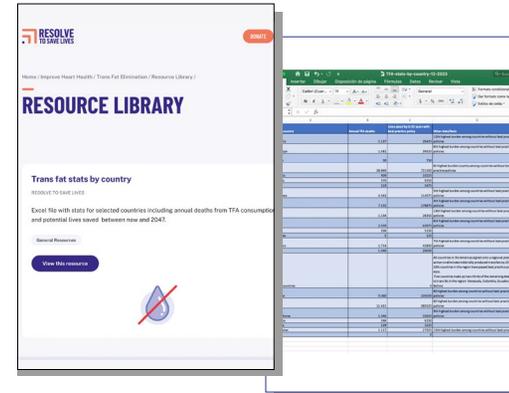
Click on the download buttons to access the fact sheets.

## WHO fact sheet: trans fat



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## TFA statistics for selected countries



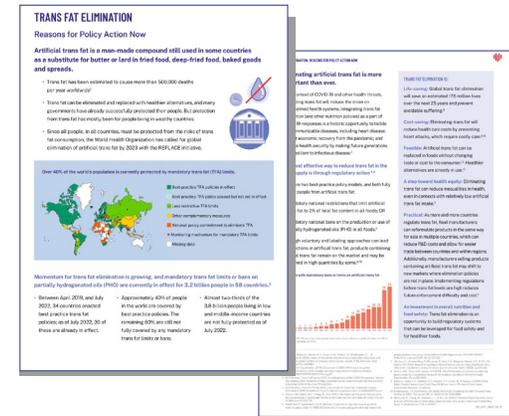
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## Developing and implementing a trans fat elimination policy A 7-Step Guide for Country Policymakers



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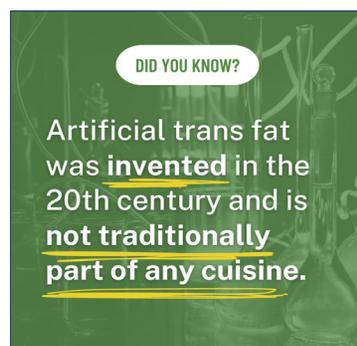
## Trans fat elimination Reasons for Policy Action Now



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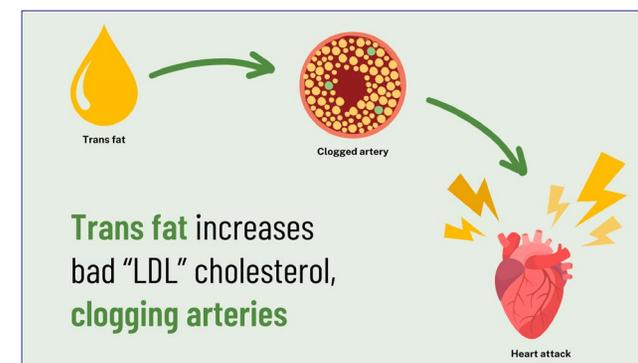
# Social media assets

Click on the social media cards to download.



## Sample messages

- Every day in [country], people consume harmful trans fat without knowing it. This year, trans fat will cause [insert number] deaths.
- Around the world, more than 278,000 people die because of trans fat consumption. That's about one person every two minutes.
- Deadly trans fat can be replaced with healthier alternatives, without changing the taste of food or how much it costs the consumer.
- In [country], eliminating trans fat could save [insert number] lives by 2048. Many governments have already successfully protected their people. [Country] should be next. #REPLACetransfat
- We're calling for an end to preventable deaths from trans fat consumption. [Country] should pass a best-practice trans fat elimination policy now.



# Sample op-ed

## Eliminating artificial trans fat in [PLACE- COUNTRY OR REGION] could save [NUMBER] lives over the next 25 years

Artificial trans fat, often found in snack foods, baked goods and some cooking oils, clogs arteries and leads to heart attacks and death. Every year, coronary heart disease caused by trans fat consumption kills an estimated [NUMBER] people in [PLACE] prematurely.

But these lives can be saved. Artificial trans fats can be replaced with healthier alternatives, without changing the taste of food or costs to consumers.

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) called for the global elimination of trans fat, and countries took action. Today, best practice policies cover **[3.7 billion people- as of 12/2023]**, or close to half of the world's population—a vast improvement from just five years ago, when only 6% of people worldwide were protected from this toxic additive. The trans fat elimination policies already in effect will save millions of lives.

In addition to saving lives, eliminating trans fat strengthens economies. Studies in Kenya, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Denmark have shown that trans fat regulations save lives and are cost-saving to governments.

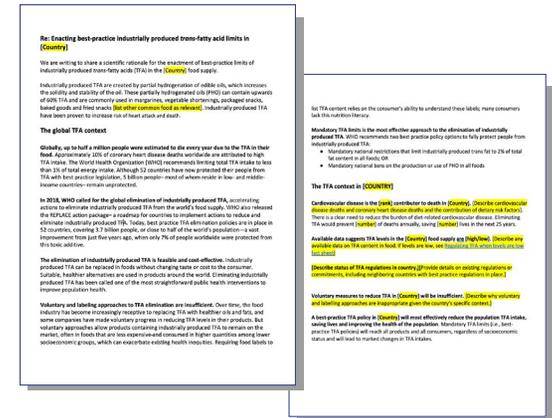
Now is the time for [PLACE] to join the **[53 – as of 12/2023]** countries with best practice trans fat elimination policies in effect. By taking decisive action to protect their people from trans fat today, [PLACE] could save **[NUMBER]** lives over the next 25 years.

The path to trans fat elimination is clear. WHO recommends two best practice policy models:

1. Mandatory national restrictions that limit industrially produced trans fatty acids (iTFA) to 2% of total fat content in all foods
2. Mandatory national ban on the production and use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) in all foods

WHO's REPLACE action package provides a step-by-step, strategic approach to eliminating artificial trans fat from national food supplies. **[Include information about available technical support for trans fat elimination relevant to the authors- e.g., from the authors organization]**

Implementing a best-practice trans fat elimination policies will allow **[PLACE]** to save lives and money, creating a more resilient population and economy. The time to act is now.



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# Sample outreach letters

## Sample letter: REPLACE annual progress report

Minister name  
Address  
Date

Dear Minister,

I have the honor of sharing with you the most recent World Health Organization (WHO) report on the global status of trans fat elimination.

This year's report highlighted that **[describe status TFA regulations in country/region.]**

I would like to urge you to **[take the next relevant step; e.g. develop and pass best practice trans fat elimination legislation]** by **[date]**. Such action will protect the people of **[Country]** from the harms of trans fat and has the potential to save **[number]** lives every year.

By passing a best practice regulation, you will affirm **[Country's]** commitment to the health and well-being of its people, and pave the way for similar regulations in other countries in the region and worldwide.

**[Letter writer's organization]** and its global partners on trans fat elimination remain committed to providing support to **[Country's]** efforts to implement best practice regulations. For more information, please see the REPLACE action package, available at <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/replace-trans-fat>.

Sincerely,

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## Sample letter: Enacting best-practice industrially produced trans-fatty acid limits in **[Country]**

We are writing to share a scientific rationale for the enactment of best-practice limits of industrially produced trans-fatty acids (TFA) in the **[Country]** food supply.

Industrially produced TFA are created by partial hydrogenation of edible oils, which increases the solidity and stability of the oil. These partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) can contain upwards of 60% TFA and are commonly used in margarines, vegetable shortenings, packaged snacks, baked goods and fried snacks **[list other common food as relevant]**. Industrially produced TFA have been proven to increase risk of heart attack and death.

**Globally, more than 278,000 people are estimated to die every year due to TFA in their food.** Approximately 10% of coronary heart disease deaths worldwide are attributed to high TFA intake. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends limiting total TFA intake to less than 1% of total energy intake. Although 53 countries have now protected their people from TFA with best practice legislation, over 4 billion people— most of whom reside in low- and middle-income countries— remain unprotected.

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# For more information

WHO and Resolve to Save Lives, a not-for-profit organization, collaborate to support the implementation of the **REPLACE action package**, which provides a strategic approach to eliminating industrially produced trans fat from national food supplies.

# Contact us

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