

Press Note

Industrially produced trans fats are formed during partial hydrogenation, a process used by the vanaspati industry to harden and stabilize liquid vegetable oils. This process maintains the taste and smell characteristics of oils while enabling a longer shelf life for final food products. There are growing concerns about potential health effects of TFAs particularly those derived from vanaspati. There is a significant and growing body of scientific evidence linking trans fats to coronary heart disease indicating that trans fats may do even more harm than saturated fats. Several countries such as, Denmark, USA, Canada etc. have introduced regulations on the limit trans fatty acids in edible oils.

On the basis of a detailed risk assessment carried out by the National Institute of Nutrition and review of scientific literature, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India proposes to introduce regulations of trans fatty acid in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. A National Consultation was also carried out by National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad with all stakeholders on the options available for regulations of TFA by FSSAI. Based on the inputs received, Authority now proposes to introduce a limit of 10% for TFA in vanaspati / partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to be brought down to 5% in 3years. Chemical and Enzymatic esterification for production of vanaspati for regulating trans fatty acids is also proposed to be allowed.

Suggestions have also been received for permitting use of Palm Stearin in vanaspati, since it will enable industry to reduce the melting point levels and obtain the desired consistency. Authority has also proposed to introduce mandatory labelling of trans fats and saturated fats content on vanaspati packs, edible oils or other products containing TFA from vanaspati sources.

The detailed note outlining the background of the proposed measure, the options available and a summary of scientific literature is available at the Authority website : www.fssai.gov.in. Interested stakeholders are invited to send in their comments to adgpfa@nb.nic.in within a period of 30 days, after which the Authority proposes to finalise regulations for submission to the Government.