



WHO Report on Global Trans Fat Elimination

For Prelims: World Health Organization (WHO), Trans fats, Bad Cholesterol (LDL), Eat Right Movement, Heart Attack Rewind, Diabetes, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), REPLACE.

For Mains: Impacts of Trans Fat, Challenges in Eliminating Trans Fat, Initiatives to Eliminate Trans Fat.

Why in News?

A new report from the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has found that **5 billion people globally remain unprotected from harmful trans fats**, increasing their risk of heart disease and death.

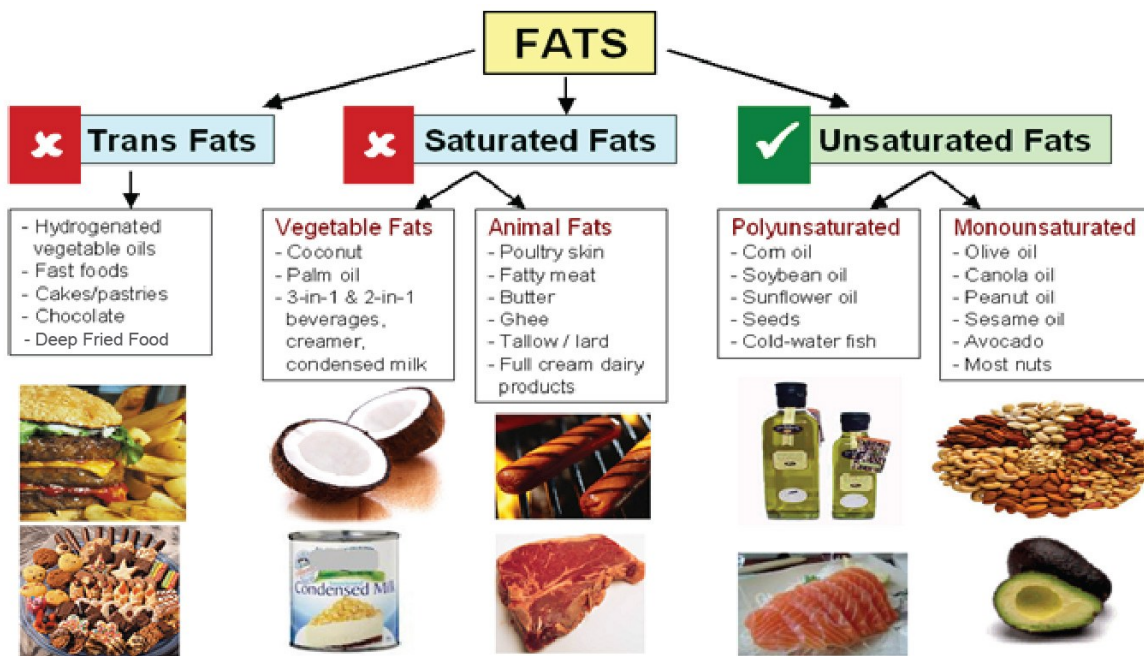
- WHO first called for the global elimination of industrially produced trans fats in 2018, with an **elimination target set for 2023**.

What are the Major Highlights of the Report?

- According to WHO, the consumption of trans fats, which can be found in **packaged foods, baked goods, cooking oils and spreads**, is responsible for up to **half a million premature deaths** from heart disease every year.
- 43 countries have now **implemented best-practice policies for tackling trans-fat** in food, with 2.8 billion people protected globally. Many countries in America and Europe have phased the substance out with bans on partially hydrogenated oils.
 - However, **no low-income countries** have yet adopted such measures.
- Currently, **9 of the 16 countries** with the highest estimated proportion of coronary heart disease deaths caused by trans-fat intake do not have a best-practice policy.
 - They are **Australia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Ecuador, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nepal, Pakistan and Republic of Korea**.
- Best-practices in trans-fat elimination policies follow specific criteria established by WHO and limit industrially produced trans-fat in all settings. There are **two best-practice policy alternatives**:
 - mandatory national limit of **2 grams of industrially produced trans-fat per 100 grams** of total fat in all foods;
 - mandatory **national ban on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils** as an ingredient in all foods.

What are Trans Fats?

- **About:**
 - Trans fat, or trans-fatty acids, **are unsaturated fatty acids** that come from either natural or industrial sources.
 - Naturally-occurring trans-fat come from ruminants (cows and sheep).
 - Industrially-produced trans-fat is formed in an industrial process that adds **hydrogen to vegetable oil converting the liquid into a solid**, resulting in **“partially hydrogenated” oil (PHO)**.



Impacts:

- Trans fats have been linked to an **increased risk of heart disease**, as they can raise **bad cholesterol (LDL)** levels in the blood and lower good cholesterol (HDL) levels.
- They can also contribute to the development of other health conditions such as **diabetes and obesity**.

Challenges in Eliminating Trans Fat:

- Trans fats are a **cheap and easy way to stabilise and extend the shelf life of food products**, which is why they are widely used by food manufacturers.
 - Many **small and medium-sized food manufacturers** may not have the resources or technical expertise to **reformulate their products to remove trans fats**.
- Trans fats are often **used in food service and restaurant settings**, which can be harder to regulate than retail food products.
- **Changing consumer habits and taste preferences** can be difficult, as people have become accustomed to the taste and texture of foods that contain trans fats.
- Some countries or regions may have **limited infrastructure and resources** to monitor and enforce the ban of trans fats.

Initiatives to Eliminate Trans Fat:

India:

- **Eat Right Movement:** Launched in 2018, the programme is built on two broad pillars of 'Eat Healthy' and 'Eat Safe'.
- **Swachh Bharat Yatra:** A Pan-India cyclothon, was launched under the movement to educate **citizens on issues of food safety, combating food adulteration and healthy diets**.
- **Heart Attack Rewind:** It is a 30-second public service announcement which was broadcasted in **17 languages on social media platforms**.
 - The objective of the campaign was to **warn citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans fats** and offer strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives.
- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has stated that all food items should contain less than **2% of trans fat from Jan 2022**.

Global:

- WHO released **REPLACE**, a step-by-step guide for the elimination of **industrially-produced trans-fatty acids** from the global food supply.
 - **REPLACE** provides six strategic actions to ensure the prompt, complete, and sustained elimination of industrially-produced trans fats from the food supply:
 - **REview** dietary sources of industrially-produced trans fats and the

- landscape for required policy change.
- **Promote** the replacement of industrially-produced trans fats with healthier fats and oils.
 - **Legislate** or enact regulatory actions to eliminate industrially-produced trans fats.
 - **Assess** and monitor trans fats content in the food supply and changes in trans-fat consumption in the population.
 - **Create** awareness of the negative health impact of trans fats among policymakers, producers, suppliers, and the public.
 - **Enforce** compliance of policies and regulations.

Way Forward

- **Education and Awareness:** Raising awareness among the public and food industry about the **dangers of trans fats and the importance of reducing their consumption** can help encourage change.
- **Monitoring and Enforcement:** Governments can establish monitoring and enforcement systems to ensure that **food manufacturers are in compliance with regulations** and labelling requirements.
- **Research and Development:** Investing in research and development of new technologies and ingredients that can **replace trans fats in food products**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question(PYQ)

Q. A company marketing food products advertises that its items do not contain trans-fats. What does this campaign signify to the customers? (2011)

1. The food products are not made out of hydrogenated oils.
2. The food products are not made out of animal fats/ oils.
3. The oils used are not likely to damage the cardiovascular health of the consumers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Source: WHO