

Resolution on trans fats (TFAs)

2016/2637(RSP) - 26/10/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 586 votes to 19 with 38 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on trans fats (TFAs).

Members recalled that trans fatty acids (TFAs) are a particular type of unsaturated fat mainly found in industrially produced partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. Many restaurants and fast-food outlets use TFAs to deep-fry foods because they are inexpensive and can be reused many times in commercial fryers.

Frequent consumption of industrially produced partially hydrogenated vegetable oils has been associated with an **increased risk** of cardiovascular disease, infertility, endometriosis, gallstones, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, obesity and some cancers.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recommends that 'TFA intakes should be as low as is possible within the context of a nutritionally adequate diet'. The **WHO** recommends more specifically that consumption of TFAs **should be less than 1 % of daily energy intake**. However, a recent study compiling data from nine EU countries reports that higher intakes exist within specific sub-populations in some of those Member States

EU legislation **does not regulate** the content of TFAs in foodstuffs, nor does it require its labelling. The fact that unfortunately only one in three consumers in the EU has knowledge about TFAs shows that labelling measures have failed to be effective.

Under the circumstances, Parliament called on the Commission **to establish within two years, an EU legal limit on industrial TFAs (as both an ingredient and a final product) in all food** in order to reduce their intake among all population groups. The proposal should be accompanied by a thorough impact assessment evaluating the industrial reformulation costs that would be incurred by a mandatory limit and the potential for these costs to be passed on to consumers.

Members were concerned that **vulnerable groups**, including citizens with lower education and socioeconomic status, and children, are more inclined to eat food with higher TFA content.

The resolution also recalled that studies show that policies aimed at restricting the TFA are feasible, achievable and likely to have a positive effect on public health. **Denmark successfully** brought in a national limit of 2 % of trans fat in oils and fats in 2003.

The food industry was asked to **prioritise alternative solutions that comply with health standards**, such as the use of improved oils, new procedures for the modification of fats or combinations of substitutes for TFAs (fibres, cellulose, starches, protein mixtures, etc.).