

Trans fat elimination

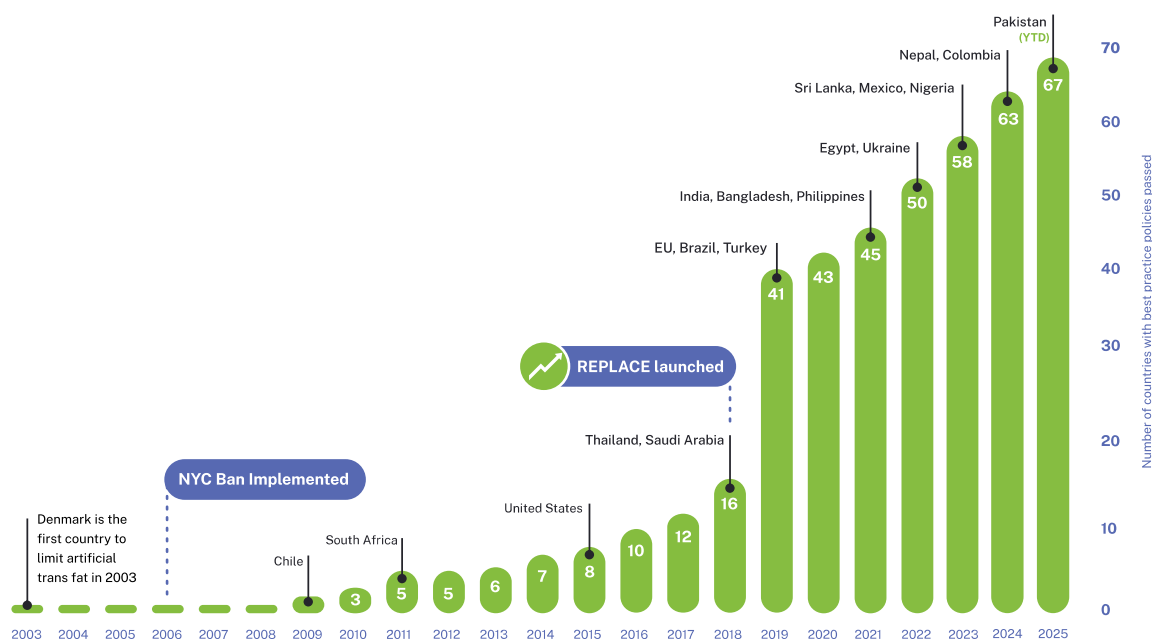
Reasons for policy action now

Artificial trans fat is a man-made compound still used in some countries in fried food, deep-fried food, baked goods and spreads.

- Trans fat was previously estimated to cause more than 500,000 deaths per year worldwide.¹
- Trans fat can be eliminated and replaced with healthier alternatives, and many governments have already successfully protected their people. But protection from trans fat has mostly been for people living in wealthy countries.
- Since all people, in all countries, must be protected from the risks of trans fat consumption, the World Health Organization has called for global elimination of artificial trans fat with the REPLACE initiative.

Momentum for trans fat elimination is growing, and best practice limits or bans of partially hydrogenated oils are currently in effect in 67 countries, covering 4 billion people.²

- Between April 2018 and July 2026, 53 countries enacted best practice trans fat policies.
- Just four countries — China, Russia, Indonesia and Iran — account for approximately half of remaining trans fat-related deaths.



Eliminating artificial trans fat is more important than ever.

Trans fat elimination and other nutrition and food policies, such as [sodium reduction](#), are central to countries' efforts to prevent non-communicable disease deaths and illnesses, reduce health care costs and improve diet quality for people of all ages. Evidence shows that even in countries with low trans fat burden, eliminating trans fat saves lives and is cost saving.³

¹ Wang, Q., Afshin, A., Yakoob, M. Y., Singh, G. M., Rehm, C. D., Khatibzadeh, S., ... & Mozaffarian, D. (2016). Impact of nonoptimal intakes of saturated, polyunsaturated, and trans fat on global burdens of coronary heart disease. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, 5(1), e002891.

² World Health Organization. (2019). Countdown to 2023: WHO report on global trans fat elimination 2019. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334170/9789240010178-eng.pdf>

³ Marklund M, Aminde LN, Wanjaw MN, et al. Estimated health benefits, costs and cost-effectiveness of eliminating dietary industrial trans fatty acids in Kenya: cost-effectiveness analysis. *BMJ Global Health* 2023;8:e012692.)

The most effective way to reduce trans fat in the food supply is through regulatory action^{4,5}

Two best-practice policy models are recommended by WHO to fully protect people from artificial trans fat:



- Mandatory national restrictions that limit artificial trans fat to 2% of total fat content in all foods; OR
- Mandatory national bans on the production or use of partially hydrogenated oils (PHO) in all foods.⁶

Although voluntary and labeling approaches can lead to reductions in artificial trans fat, products containing artificial trans fat remain on the market and may be consumed in high quantities by some.^{4,7,8}

Trans fat elimination is:

Life-saving: Global trans fat elimination will save an estimated 17.5 million lives over the next 25 years and prevent avoidable suffering.⁹

Cost-saving: Eliminating trans fat will reduce health care costs by preventing heart attacks, which require costly care.^{3,10}

Feasible: Artificial trans fat can be replaced in foods without changing taste or cost to the consumer.¹⁰ Healthier alternatives are already in use.¹¹

A step toward health equity: Eliminating trans fat can reduce inequalities in health, even in contexts with relatively low artificial trans fat intake.⁵

Practical: As more and more countries regulate trans fat, food manufacturers can reformulate products in the same way for sale in multiple countries, which can reduce R&D costs and allow for easier trade between countries and within regions. Because manufacturers selling products containing artificial trans fat may shift to new markets where elimination policies are not in place, implementing regulations before trans fat levels are high reduces future enforcement difficulty and cost.⁴

An investment in overall nutrition and food safety: Trans fat elimination is an opportunity to build regulatory systems that can be leveraged for food safety and for healthier foods.

4 NCD Alliance. Trans fat free by 2023. Case Studies in Trans Fat Elimination. Geneva, Switzerland, 2019. Available at: <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/transfatfree2023report>

5 Downs, S.M., Bloem, M.Z., Zheng, M., et al. (2017). The Impact of Policies to Reduce trans Fat Consumption: A Systematic Review of the Evidence. *Curr Dev Nutr.* 2017 Dec; 1(12): doi: 10.3945/cdn.117.000778.

6 World Health Organization. (2019). Module 3: Legislate or regulate. How-to guide for trans fat policy action. In: REPLACE trans fat: an action package to eliminate industrially produced trans-fatty acids. Geneva:World Health Organization; 2019 (WHO/NMH/NHD/19.14). Licence CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

7 Hendry, V.L., Almirón-Roig, E., Monsivais, P., Jebb, S.A., Benjamin Neelon, S.E., Griffin, S.J., Ogilvie, D.B. (2015). Impact of regulatory interventions to reduce intake of artificial trans-fatty acids: a systematic review. *American journal of public health*, 105(3), pp.e32-e42.

8 Downs, S.M., Thow, A.M., Leeder, S.R. (2013). The effectiveness of policies for reducing dietary trans fat: a systematic review of the evidence. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 91, pp.262-269h.

9 Kontis, V., Cobb, L. K., Mathers, C. D., Frieden, T. R., Ezzati, M., & Danaei, G. (2019). Three Public Health Interventions Could Save 94 Million Lives in 25 Years Global Impact Assessment Analysis. *Circulation*.

10 Ghebreyesus, T.A. and Frieden, T.R. (2018). REPLACE: A roadmap to make the world trans fat free by 2023. *The Lancet* 391, no. 10134 (2018): 1978-1980.

11 Marklund, M., Zheng, M., Veerman, J. L., & Wu, J. H. (2020). Estimated health benefits, costs, and cost-effectiveness of eliminating industrial trans-fatty acids in Australia: A modelling study. *PLoS medicine*, 17(11), e1003407.