

Reducing industrial trans-fats in Nigeria and Pakistan

Country: Nigeria and Pakistan

Themes: Policy and budget cycle management

Sub-themes: Situation/contextual analysis

Date: 2023



Overview



Industrially produced trans-fatty acids (iTFA) are unsaturated fats found in many foods, especially those containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. Trans-fatty acids (TFAs) occur naturally in foods obtained from ruminants, such as dairy products and meats.

The consumption of iTFA has been linked to an increased risk of heart attacks and death from heart diseases. In **Pakistan**, iTFA are mainly ingested from *vanaspati ghee* and industrial margarines, with the national consumption levels of iTFA being the second highest in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

In **Nigeria**, consumption estimates are harder to find due to a lack of data. However, it is estimated that iTFA are widespread in food manufacturing.

The World Health Organization (WHO) [REPLACE](#) initiative outlines strategies to address these issues, including:

- reviewing dietary sources of iTFA and policy change requirements
- promoting replacement with healthier fats and oils
- legislating actions to eliminate iTFA
- assessing and monitoring changes in trans-fat consumption
- creating awareness of the negative health impacts
- enforcing compliance with policies and regulations

As part of this initiative, the SUN Business Network (SBN) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) in both countries, in partnership with the International Food and Beverage Alliance, have launched multi-stakeholder pilot projects to support the identification of iTFA replacement solutions in the food value chain.



Objectives of the action brief

This action brief outlines the results of mapping exercises conducted in Pakistan and Nigeria to understand the context of iTFA consumption and potential replacement solutions.



Period covered

The mapping exercise in Nigeria took place in May–August 2019. A workshop in October 2019 gathered more than 40 stakeholders to discuss incentives and solutions for local companies to replace iTFAs in foods. In Pakistan, the mapping exercise took place in autumn 2019, and a workshop was held in January 2020.



What action was taken?

The mapping exercise conducted by the SBN and GAIN included a desk review to better understand use of iTFA across the food value chain, and key informant interviews with government and private sector stakeholders in Pakistan and Nigeria. Both studies expanded on the WHO REPLACE Modules 1 and 2 frameworks (ie. Review – how to guide for landscape assessment and roadmap development for elimination of transfat, Promote – How to guide for determining the best replacement oils and interventions to promote their use) for the assessment of iTFA sources to later identify replacement options that could inform a country specific REPLACE roadmap. The key findings and recommendations that emerged from the mapping exercises are summarized as follows:

Nigeria:

- Adopt regulations to limit iTFAs to 2 g per 100 g of oils and fats, including measures to address iTFA content in the informal sector.

- Ensure that regulations consider the capacity and time needed by local companies to achieve the limit specified.
- Strengthen laboratory capacity to conduct necessary testing.
- Ensure that regulations require that food business operators supplying food to other business operators provide them with information on the amount of trans fat in their products.
- Involve business in the National Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2019–2025), particularly around implementing the iTFA strategy.
- Increase consumer awareness via public-sector campaigns on the negative impacts of iTFAs to increase demand for products free of trans-fats and reward compliant businesses.



Pakistan:

- Increase support to small and medium enterprises in identifying and implementing replacement solutions. This could take the form of a training workshop on technical manufacturing solutions and the sharing of information on the costs for individual companies of implementing the technical solutions.
- Support consumer education on the health impacts of iTFA consumption via a combination of public and private initiatives. This could include business-to-business initiatives to increase the marketing skills of small and medium enterprises for iTFA-free products.
- Align regulations for imported and local products across the country to ensure a level playing field. These should be complemented with the right enabling environment strategies, including building laboratory capacity to assess iTFA content at affordable prices and introducing duties and taxes more favourable to iTFA-free products.
- Support demand for iTFA-free products via public institution procurement policies.



What would the countries do differently?

The mapping exercise was the first step in the pilot project, so more information will continue to emerge. However, one initial challenge is that there is strong demand for products with high iTFA content, as these trans-fats enhance food palatability and texture.

The limited knowledge of small and medium enterprises regarding the negative impacts of iTFA consumption also is a barrier to championing the proposed measures, in

addition to concerns around potential price increases as a result of trans-fat replacement.

These challenges could be tackled through stronger marketing approaches, more targeted awareness-raising campaigns, and the involvement of businesses (small and medium enterprises in particular) in stakeholder consultations.



Adaptation and applicability

→ For countries that have yet to embark on iTFA replacement, many steps can be taken. In some countries, awareness-raising among government actors on REPLACE and its mission is needed, and the WHO can support those processes, including through the development of regulations. Ongoing engagement is needed to understand business awareness, challenges in gaining compliance and realistic timelines for regulation enforcement. These discussions and support efforts can be facilitated by local business networks, including the SBN (where it exists).



Next steps

This mapping initiative is a component of the global pilot project conducted by GAIN and SBN. Following the mapping phase, a workshop focused on iTFA replacement solutions will be conducted, featuring experts from IFBA. Subsequently, selected companies will undergo a follow-up session to assist them in the implementation of iTFA replacement solutions.

In the shorter term, national SBNs can provide a continuous support to businesses to increase skills on replacement solutions, business-to-business technical assistance and intentional targeted approaches to sensitize businesses and consumers to iTFA replacement. SBNs also can facilitate links to technical partners to help governments review iTFA standards.



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Further information



WHO REPLACE initiative:
<https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/replace-trans-fat>



Nigeria Mapping Exercise Report:
https://co2f5aneqd.preview.infomaniak.website/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/20201020_GAIN_report_Nigeria-October.pdf



Pakistan Mapping Exercise Report:
[20201019_Gain_Report_Pakistan-October-22.pdf](https://co2f5aneqd.preview.infomaniak.website/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/20201019_Gain_Report_Pakistan-October-22.pdf)

This Good Practice was developed in collaboration with the SUN Business Network (SBN). For more information about the SBN, please visit their website: <https://sunbusinessnetwork.org/>

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