



# The Commission Report on Trans Fatty Acids the Plans of the Commission

Alexandra Nikolakopoulou  
European Commission,  
Directorate General Health and Food Safety  
Food information and composition, food waste

TFA Seminar  
4 April 2016  
Brussels

# Report on Trans Fat (TFA): adopted 3 December 2015

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011, Article 30 7.:

*"By **13 December 2014**, the Commission, taking into account scientific evidence and experience acquired in Member States, shall submit a report on the **presence of trans fats in foods and in the overall diet** of the Union population.*

*The aim of the report shall be to **assess the impact of appropriate means that could enable consumers to make healthier food and overall dietary choices or that could promote the provision of healthier food options to consumers**, including, among others, the **provision of information** on trans fats to consumers **or restrictions on their use**; The Commission shall accompany this report with a legislative proposal, if appropriate."*

# Steps Drafting the TFA Report

- **Joint Research Centre:**  
literature review, collect further evidence for all aspect required to be covered by TFA report
- **Consumer studies (labelling):**
  - online experiment 8 Member States
  - field experiment in-shop 1 Member State
- **Stakeholder Consultations:**
  - ensure considered evidence is as complete as possible
  - opportunity to express positions on options considered

# Summary I: The Health Problem

- Consumption of TFA **increases the risk of heart disease** more than any other nutrient
- **Heart disease is the leading cause of death** in the Union, therefore high TFA intakes are of particular concern
- There is limited data available for TFA intakes in the entire EU, therefore, the precise **contribution of TFA intake to the overall health problem is difficult to assess for the entire EU**

## Summary II: TFA Levels in Foods

- The majority of food products contain **<2 g TFA/100g fat**
- 77% of these are below **0.5 g TFA/100g fat**
- However, there are **still products** in the European food market **with high TFA levels**  
(e.g. biscuits or popcorn 40-50g TFA/100g fat, including non-pre-packed foods)
- Industrial TFA levels **seem to have been decreasing** in many food groups **in some but not in all EU countries 2006-2013**
- In **some Eastern and South-Eastern European countries**, industrial TFA levels in **some food categories have not dropped meaningfully** since mid-2000

# Summary III: TFA Intakes in the EU

- **Average consumption** levels are **below levels recommended** by the WHO (1% of energy intake)
- **Higher intakes occur within specific sub-populations** (e.g. low income citizens, university students aged 18 to 30 years or generally citizens of this age range in a few Member States)

# Main Options Considered

- Option 1: **Mandatory TFA content declaration**
- Option 2: A **legal limit on the industrial TFA content of food**
- Option 3: **Voluntary agreements** towards reducing TFA in foods and diets at EU level

Options have different potential health benefits but also different potential burden on producers

# Option 1: Mandatory TFA Content Declaration

- 2 purposes:
  - provide **incentives to industry** towards reducing TFA
  - enable consumers to make **informed food choices**
- Effectiveness would depend on
  - the **importance of the TFA labelled products** in view of average TFA intake
  - consumers' **capacity to appropriately use the information**
  - consumers' **readiness to pay more** for healthier food

➔ Assessment points to important limitations
- Currently consumer **awareness and understanding is low**
- TFA labelling increases the complexity of a decision making process, which might lead to a **reduced ability of consumers to identify the healthier food choice**



## Option 2: Legal Limit on TFA Content of Food

- Expected to achieve the **biggest reductions** in industrial TFA intake, applying to all products, pre-packaged and non-packaged
- Consumers would be systematically provided with healthier food options without needing to distinguish products with lower TFA levels
- **Compatible with internal market**, prevents further market fragmentation
- Potential **public health benefits would be the highest** for this option
- The available methods for monitoring and enforcing a limit for specific products should be taken into due account

## Option 3: Voluntary Agreements

- The success of this approach appears to **depend on** the degree of public engagement and corporate social responsibility of **food business operators**
- **Issues of competition** if food business operators comply with national policies to reduce TFA but have to compete in other parts of the EU market with food business operators that offer slightly cheaper products with high TFA contents
- Consequences would be similar to the ones of a mandatory limit but their **magnitude would clearly depend on the scope of industry participation** and the coverage of food products on the market

# Situation

- **4 Member States** have already introduced national legal limits
- Several Member States signalled their **preference for an EU level decision**, while highlighting their readiness to go ahead with national TFA-related measures in the absence of an EU decision
- Therefore, **further market fragmentation could be expected**

# Next Steps I

- A **legal limit for industrial TFA** content could be the most effective measure in terms of public health, consumer protection and compatibility with the internal market
- **Further investigation is needed:**
  - *the way in which a legal limit could be technically put into practice*
  - *to minimize risks of unintended consequences and impacts on specific producers and products*

# Next Steps II

- **Impact Assessment**
- An Commission **Interservice Steering Group**:  
agree an **Inception Impact Assessment**  
(published, open for a **4-week feedback mechanism**, includes the  
consultation strategy, including a **12 week public consultation**)
- **External contractor** to help collect further information

***THANK YOU !***

