

TRANS FATS [UPSC Notes GS III]

Context:

The WHO has welcomed its partnership with the International Food and Beverage Alliance (IFBA) to achieve the target of eliminating industrially produced trans fats by 2023.

Details:

- ☐ Trans fat, also called the worst form of fat in food, responsible for over 5, 00,000 deaths globally from coronary heart disease each year.
- ☐ The WHO says that eliminating industrially produced trans-fat is one of the simplest and most effective ways to save lives and create a healthier food supply.
- ☐ WHO met with IFBA to discuss actions to eliminate industrial Trans fats, and reduce salt, sugar and saturated fats in processed foods.
- ☐ The meeting also stressed the value of regulatory action on labelling, marketing and urged industry for full adherence to the WHO code of marketing of breast milk substitutes.
- ☐ The commitment made by the IFBA is in line with the WHO's target to eliminate industrial trans fat from the global food supply by 2023.
- ☐ It is decided by IFBA to ensure that the amount of industrial trans fat in their products does not exceed 2 gram per 100 g fat/oil globally by 2023.

Trans-fat:

- ☐ Trans fats are the most harmful type of fats which can have much more adverse effects on our body than any other dietary constituent.
- ☐ These fats are largely produced artificially but a small amount also occurs naturally.
- ☐ Artificial TFAs are formed when hydrogen is made to react with the oil to produce fats resembling pure ghee/butter.
- ☐ The major sources of artificial TFAs are the partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVO)/vanaspati/ margarine.
- ☐ It poses a higher risk of heart disease than saturated fats. Saturated fats raise total cholesterol levels; TFAs not only raise total cholesterol levels but also reduce the good cholesterol (HDL).

Trans fat and India

- ☐ In 2003, Denmark became the first country to ban trans fats in foods. After Denmark removed trans fat from food in 2003, Chile, Norway, Singapore, South Africa and Ecuador, Austria, Hungary and Latvia have followed suit. But in India this killer ingredient remains at large in food.
- ☐ As of now, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) does not have any data on compliance and is in the process of testing products to see if the industry has adhered to the regulation.
- ☐ This is important considering that India now plans to be a zero trans fats nation by 2022, a year earlier than the timeline set by World Health Organization.
- ☐ With this, the trans fats in vanaspati /bakery shortening/margarine would be less than 2 per cent to bring the level of trans fats to zero in food. To help the industry, this would be implemented in a phased manner.
- ☐ After years of efforts by activists, the trans fats standards in the country were set down at 10 per cent in 2013, which was then reduced to 5 per cent in 2017.

Draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019

- ☐ Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) recently introduced draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019. The draft (put out for comments on the FSSAI website on July 2, 2019), when adopted, will supersede the existing Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011.

- ☐ The draft regulations for packaged foods addresses labelling gaps and adopts some of the global best practices aimed at limiting intake of packaged foods high in fats, sugar or salt.
- ☐ Calls for declaring quantity of salt, added sugar, saturated fats and trans fats and mentioning serving size, number of servings and per serve percentage contribution of a particular nutrient to the recommended dietary allowance (RDA)
- ☐ Introduces 'front-of-pack' labelling along with red-coloured warning symbol to help identify foods high in calories, saturated fats, trans fats, added sugar and salt
- ☐ CSE believes proposed draft will enable people to identify unhealthy packaged foods and help address growing incidence of obesity and non-communicable diseases in the country.

Trans fat free' logo

- ☐ Bakeries, sweet shops and other food business operators can voluntarily display 'trans fat free' logo on food products and in their outlets, according to the food safety regulator FSSAI.
- ☐ The logo 'trans-fat free' can be used provided the food establishment's uses trans-fat free fats oils, and do not have industrial trans-fat more than 0.2 gram per 100 gram of the food.
- ☐ It will be the responsibility of the food business operators to comply with the requirements as specified in the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations 2018.

Relevance to India:

India has among the highest number of coronary heart disease cases in the world and must try to beat the deadline.