CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

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Case study: Brief

IMPLEMENTING AND ENFORCING TRANS FAT (TFA) ELIMINATION POLICY IN CHILE

TYPE OF POLICY: Limit of 2 grams of iTFA per 100 grams of fat in all food products; iTFA banned in infant and toddler formula

DATE PASSED: April 2009

IN EFFECT: 2011 for domestic margarines and fats; 2014 for all other food products

TOTAL COVERAGE: 19 million people

ENFORCEMENT APPROACH: Budget- and risk-based surveillance and laboratory analysis; Compliance monitoring linked with labeling surveillance

LIVES SAVED PER YEAR: 528[1]

Key takeaways

- Phased implementation — first limiting iTFA in oils and fats, then other food products — addressed technical implementation challenges, facilitated reformulation and led to high industry compliance.
- Linking surveillance of the iTFA limit with monitoring efforts for other food policies can maximize the use of limited government resources.
- Implementation of an iTFA limit is cost effective, as it does not require investment in consumer education.

Context and background

On April 23, 2009, the Chilean Ministry of Health introduced a limit of 2 grams industrial trans fat (iTFA) per 100 grams of fats in all food products.[2] The regulation also established a limit of 3 grams total TFA per 100 grams of fats for infant formula and follow-on milks, later modified to ban all iTFA in these products. To address the challenge of insufficient raw materials and technology for compliance at the time of passage, Chile opted for phased implementation; the limit went into effect first for margarines and fats for domestic use in Phase 1 (2011), then for all other food products in Phase 2 (2014).

Implementation

Phased implementation provided enough time for iTFA-free replacement oils and fats to be made available to manufacturers, enabling them to adjust recipes in compliance with the regulation. The staggered transition period also allowed for additional time to redesign recipes for more complicated foods, such as bakery and pastry products. Training laboratory staff on product sampling and laboratory methodologies to measure iTFA supported the transition.

Enforcement

Compliance is regarded as the primary responsibility of manufacturers, and is monitored by government according to the risk and available budget. The Health Authority may require certificates of analysis from manufacturers and importers based on risk of non-compliance; production facilities may also be inspected for cause. While Chile does not require pre-market food registration, it does carry out import controls, with any sampling costs borne by the importer. “Control sampling” is conducted for every consignment of food

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 Decree 106 modified Art. 248 of the Sanitary Food Regulations (Decree No. 977/96) by adding the iTFA limit. To learn more about the development and adoption of Chile’s iTFA limit, refer to the case study on Chile by NCD Alliance (2019).

entering Chile for the first time and those with a history of rejection due to non-compliance; after three consecutive compliant samplings, the product is reassigned for "monitoring sampling" at a risk-based frequency or at the discretion of the Regional Ministerial Secretaries for Health.

Linking compliance monitoring: food labeling and the iTFA limit

In Chile, pre-packaged foods are required to bear standardized nutrition labels and warning labels for calories, sugar, salt and saturated fat if they exceed defined thresholds. The Ministry of Health developed the National Surveillance Plan for Food Labelling to enforce these requirements and obtain up-to-date nutritional information. The surveillance plan focuses on high-risk foods, based on their likelihood of exceeding thresholds and previous monitoring results; frequent consumption by the population; or consumption by children. By using this existing surveillance plan — enacted to support a labeling and advertising law — to monitor iTFA, Chile made efficient use of limited enforcement resources.

Outcomes

Surveillance campaigns checking compliance with both the iTFA limit and labelling requirements were carried out in 2018, 2019 and 2020/2021. The campaigns prioritized analysis of the most harmful nutrients in each food (category sugar, sodium, saturated fat and TFA) rather than analyzing each sample for calories and all other critical nutrients. Compliance with the iTFA limit in Chile is high; samples for all product categories except light mayonnaise were 100% compliant. There have been no serious sanctions issued for violations to date.

Why eliminate trans fat?

- Industrially produced *trans*-fatty acids (iTFA) man-made compounds still used in some countries as a substitute for butter or lard in fried food, deep-fried food, baked goods and spreads estimated to cause 500,000 deaths per year.[3]
- iTFA can be eliminated and replaced with healthier alternatives, and many governments have already successfully protected their people.
- Countries that do not ban iFTA are at risk of having products containing iTFA dumped on their market.
- Since all people in all countries must be protected from the risks of iTFA consumption, the World Health Organization has called for the global elimination of iTFA with the REPLACE initiative.

Read the full report: Implementing and Enforcing Trans Fat Elimination Policies, with case studies including Thailand, Chile, Singapore, Denmark, Saudi Arabia and the European Union

3 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.