



Press Release

Headline: CARICOM urged to eliminate deadly industrially produced trans fats (iTFA) from Caribbean food supply

Subhead: Jamaican research shows 1 out of 3 food products contain this harmful additive

Bridgetown, 27 May 2024. As the December 2025 deadline approaches, amidst concerns about deaths and disabilities caused by industrially produced trans fats (iTFA), the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) and several stakeholders are urging CARICOM policymakers to implement evidence-based regulations to protect its citizens from these food contaminants.

During a recent webinar, titled "[Caribbean Mobilising to Eliminate Industrially Produced Trans Fats](#)" hosted by the HCC and partners¹, it was noted that iTFA's are found in many commonly consumed packaged foods in the Caribbean and cause heart attacks and strokes, leading causes of death in the region. To address this, in 2022 Caribbean policymakers committed to the elimination of partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs), the main source of iTFAs, from national and regional food supplies by December 31, 2025. To date, however, no CARICOM country has national legislation or regulation to eliminate PHOs or limit iTFA in foods.

During the session, participants heard from **Dr Rasheed Perry, PhD Researcher at New York University**, who presented the findings of research conducted in Jamaica to test for [Industrially produced trans fat and saturated fat content of food products in Jamaica](#) for the first time. He noted that one-third (33.8%) of the food products analysed there contained iTFA and 104 out of 168 products claiming to be trans-fat free, contained trans-fats, highlighting the potentially high levels of iTFA in the Caribbean food supply and the need for validation of manufacturers labels.

Ms. Maisha Hutton, Executive Director of the HCC, emphasised that TFA regulation is an important, highly cost effective, feasible policy measure and reinforced civil society's role in building public demand for iTFA regulation. **Ms. Helen Royer, Director of Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat**, noted that the implementation of these regulations will require "the continued collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, the Government," and a "sustained effort will be required to raise awareness of the dangers of industrially produced trans fats to build support for the necessary regulatory policies." **Dr Didacus Jules, Director General of the OECS**, underscored the significance of regional cooperation, stating, "this is an important opportunity for the region to signal to its citizens that our governments prioritise our health [. . .] iTFA regulation has the potential to be the catalyst for accelerated policy across the region and we in the OECS stand firmly in support."

iTFA regulation is not only in alignment with global health standards, but also ensures compliance with the mandates of trading partners, noted, **Mr. Dean Chambliss, Caribbean Subregional Programme Director, PAHO**. "Implementing policies and legislation to ban PHOs and industrial trans fatty acids will reduce the burden of NCDs in the Caribbean, decrease associated healthcare costs, and lower economic costs due to loss of productivity from related illnesses," he emphasised. Meanwhile, **Dr Heather Armstrong, Head of the Chronic Disease and Injury Department Surveillance at CARPHA**, reaffirmed CARPHA's commitment to supporting the Interagency Committee convened to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the 6-point Policy Package

¹ Resolve to Save Lives (RTSL), CARICOM Secretariat, the Caribbean Public Health Law Forum (CPHLF), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, the Law and Health Research Unit (LHRU) of the University of the West Indies, Barbados, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB), Healthy Bahamas Coalition (HBC), Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ), Lake Health and Wellbeing of St. Kitts and Nevis, and the St. Lucia Diabetes & Hypertension Association (SLDHA).



(Promoting Healthy Diets, Food Security, And Sustainable Development In The Caribbean Through Joint Policy Action CARICOM Technical Brief).

The webinar featured a series of insightful presentations from experts, each highlighting critical aspects of efforts to eliminate iTFAs from the Caribbean food supply. **Professor Alafia Samuels, Honorary Professor at the Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR), UWI Jamaica, and Technical Consultant on the HCC iTFA project**, provided an overview of the health impacts of TFAs and the importance of engaging with food manufacturers to eliminate PHOs. She stressed the need for Caribbean food manufacturers to offer products free of iTFAs, which cause death and disability, and which are already banned in most high-income countries.

Ms. Liz Drummond, Technical Advisor for Nutrition at Resolve to Save Lives, highlighted global best practices in iTFA regulation highlighting that over 58 countries globally have passed best practice policies covering 3.7 billion people or 47% of the world’s population. She also applauded the partnership with the HCC, pointing to the crucial role of civil society in advocating for these regulations.

Panellists included **Ms. Kaj Archer, Behavioral Change Specialist, Healthy Bahamas Coalition Secretariat** and **Mr. Brian Payne, Assistant Nutrition Officer, National Nutrition Center, Ministry of Health & Wellness, Barbados** who shared the progress and challenges of iTFA regulation in their respective countries. **Dr Victor Villalobos-Daniel Regional Nutrition and Food Consultant for the Americas, PAHO** emphasised the need for laboratory testing to verify ingredients and **Ms. Michele Baker, Advocacy and Research Officer, Lake Health & Wellbeing, St. Kitts & Nevis**, who shared lessons learned from advocacy for taxation of sugar-sweetened beverages.

To ensure compliance with the mandates of trading partners, many large Caribbean food manufacturers who export to countries with TFA regulation have already removed TFA from their foods. HCC and Partners are calling for a multi-sector, multistakeholder coalition to work towards a TFA-free Caribbean for all.

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