

Legislative Council meeting on 14 March 2007
Progress Report from Food and Health Bureau on
Motion Debate on
“Legislating against the use of artificial trans fats in food production”

Purpose

The Legislative Council passed the motion on 14 March 2007 to urge the Government to legislate against the use of artificial trans fats in food production in local restaurants, to prescribe the permissible maximum level of trans fats for all imported and locally produced food, and to expeditiously legislate for the Labelling Scheme on Nutrition Information. This paper sets out the follow-up actions taken by the Administration in relation to the said motion.

2. The prevalent regulatory approach towards trans fat around the world is by labelling of trans fat content. Only a few places, such as New York City, set limits to artificial trans fat content in food. These requirements are custom-made having regard to the local dietary habits and public health conditions and only came into effect in recent years. However, some countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, consider it not necessary to regulate the artificial trans fat content in food at present because the trans fat intake level of their people is lower than the World Health Organization’s standard. To date, there is no generally accepted regulatory approach in the international community. Nor has the Codex Alimentarius Commission set any standard for regulating artificial trans fats. Therefore, we consider it appropriate to review the international practices in regulating trans fats and the local factors, such as the lifestyle and dietary habits, before considering the necessity of regulating trans fats by law. There are also views in the international community that it is more pragmatic to identify healthier substitutes for artificial trans fats and to educate consumers on food choices.

3. As for the implementation of the nutrition labelling scheme in Hong Kong, we will make reference to the practices in the international community. At the first stage of the scheme, we will consider requiring the trans fat content to be listed on labels of those prepackaged food which makes claims related to fats or cholesterol. In order to strike a balance between the public's right to choice and the need to reduce misleading or deceptive nutrition labels and claims, we will continue to consult stakeholders and understand the concerns of the trade, with a view to drawing up the details of the legislation on nutrition labelling scheme. We plan to table the regulation concerned to the Legislative Council within this year.

Food and Health Bureau
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