



**World Health
Organization**

Western Pacific
Philippines

WHO launches Third Progress Report on Global Trans Fat Elimination, features milestones in the Philippines

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The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Third Progress Report on Global Trans Fat Elimination on 7 December 2021 through a virtual high-level event that included progress on the milestones in the Philippines.

In this 2021 Report, the Philippines became one of only two lower-middle-income countries to pass a best-practice policy. This refers to the Administrative Order (AO) No. 2021-0039 signed by Dr Francisco T. Duque III, Secretary of the Department of Health, in June 2021.

The AO is considered a key national policy on the elimination of industrially-produced trans fatty acids (TFA) for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

“The DOH has leveraged global efforts and country commitments to eliminate TFA from the nation’s food supply,” said Dr Beverly Lorraine Ho, Director of the DOH’s Disease Prevention and Control Bureau and concurrent Director of Health Promotion Bureau, during the virtual launch.

“We intend for this move to complement other food system interventions in addressing nutrition-related diseases in the country. With this policy in place, we have initiated efforts to gradually eliminate TFA from our food products, as we await the passing of similar legislative efforts filed in Congress,” she added.

Three years into the organization's monitoring of the 2023 target for the elimination of industrially-produced TFA from the global food supply, WHO reports that mandatory TFA policies are currently in effect for 3.2 billion people in 57 countries.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has given this added urgency, as people living with NCDs are particularly vulnerable to becoming severely ill from the virus," said WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"Eliminating industrially-produced trans fat will be a major step forward in our fight against NCDs. This low-cost, feasible intervention can prevent heart attacks, save hundreds of thousands of lives, reduce health inequalities and reduce pressure on already over-stretched health systems. WHO's target is to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fat from the global food supply by 2023."

In the Philippines, 2.64% of deaths from coronary heart disease are attributed to TFA intake.

"WHO remains committed to assist the Government of the Philippines in implementing this very significant policy that will save many Filipino lives and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of others," said Dr Rabindra Abeyasinghe, WHO Representative to the Philippines.

Representing civil society in the Philippines, Atty Mary Grace Anne Rosales-Sto. Domingo, Project Manager of ImagineLaw Inc, emphasized the vital role that partners play in bringing awareness to a national policy. "As more people living with cardiovascular diseases are at a greater risk of contracting severe forms of COVID-19, it becomes imperative to act now and to act quickly."

To save more Filipinos from the impact of living with non-communicable diseases, the Department of Health, with support from the World Health Organization and other relevant stakeholders, is steadfast in eliminating TFA from the country's food supply and its people's diet.

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