

Guidelines on Reducing Trans Fatty Acids and Aluminium in Food

To minimise any food related risk, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) from time to time issue guidelines for trade's reference, having taken into account the results of the local risk assessment studies, international guidelines or standards as well as the local trade practices. Two recent guidelines on reducing *trans* fatty acids (TFA) and aluminium in food have been introduced.

Internationally and locally, there is increasing concern in TFA level in foods. The World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recommend that daily energy intake from TFA should be less than 1% of total energy intake (e.g. an adult with daily intake of 2000 kilocalories energy should limit the TFA intake to less than 2.2 grams per day). Locally, from 1 July 2010 onwards, all prepackaged foods must have TFA level declared on the nutrition label which enables consumers making an informed choice. Basing on results from local risk assessment studies, the CFS has also formulated advices to the trade to lower TFA in foods: (i) modify the manufacturing process to lower TFA content in foods and oils/fats; (ii) declare, for prepackaged foods, the amount of TFA content on the nutrition label to enable consumers make an informed choice; and (iii) refer to the "Trade Guidelines on Reducing Trans Fat in Food" (http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/food_leg/files/trans-fats-guide-e.pdf) for alternatives of providing healthier food choices to consumers.

In May 2009, the CFS released the Risk Assessment Study on Aluminium in Food, which revealed that high levels of aluminium were commonly found in a range of food products, probably a result of using aluminium-containing food additives. Items containing high aluminium levels included jellyfish, steamed bread/bun/cake, and some bakery products such as muffins, pancake and waffle. Although the results do not warrant changes in usual dietary advice for average individuals, people, particularly children, who regularly consume food using aluminium-containing food additives may be of higher risk. To protect public health, efforts should be made to reduce exposure to aluminium for the population.

To address the problem, a Working Group was set up by the CFS, comprising representatives from the trade and academia, to derive the Guidelines on the Use of Aluminium-containing Food Additives. The trade is advised to make reference to the following points: limit the application and quantities of aluminium-containing food additives in food products, check carefully the ingredients to see if they contain

aluminium-containing food additives, consider using other alternatives to replace them, and develop alternative techniques to reduce their use during product development; check the identity of ingredients added and add the required amount of food additives accurately during food production; and ensure to provide accurate information on prepackaged food label including specific food additives used during food labelling.