

NYC Ban on *trans* Fats Spreads

Fred Lucas

State lawmakers nationwide want to trim the fat, and they aren't talking about budgets this time.

After New York City approved a ban on *trans* fats in restaurants and school cafeterias in early December, legislators in California, Connecticut, Florida, and Massachusetts followed suit with proposals for full or partial statewide bans. The tide grew stronger in January with additional calls for prohibiting *trans* fats, also known as partially hydrogenated oils, by state legislators in Maryland, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia.

The proposals are modeled after the new rules imposed by the New York City Board of Health that will, by July 2008, ban the use of most of the artery-clogging, cholesterol-raising oils that typically are used to prepare pizza, french fries, and pancakes.

"By forcing some of the world's largest food chains and restaurants to use healthier alternatives in their food preparation, New York City has paved the way for what I hope will be a national movement to improve health quality of the food we eat in restaurants," said Connecticut Senate Minority Leader Pro Tempore John McKinney (R) in December when he announced his co-sponsorship of a similar bill for the Connecticut General Assembly.

The Connecticut proposal—with support from the

leadership of both parties—would not affect pre-packaged products such as a bag of potato chips, but mandates the elimination of *trans* fats in food prepared by restaurants by July 2008.

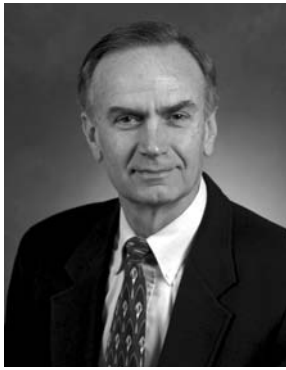
Of the twelve states that have proposed bans, legislators in three states—California, New Hampshire and New York—have suggested that the ban apply to both school cafeterias and restaurants. Florida, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia will consider proposals to prohibit *trans* fats in schools. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey and Rhode Island are focused on eliminating *trans* fats in restaurants.

One of a handful of related bills in California aims to extend the ban to packaged foods that contain *trans* fats. Bills in Florida and South Carolina would require restaurants to disclose whether they use *trans* fats.

Overall, the concept appears to have bipartisan sup-



New York City Mayor Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a chief proponent of the city's *trans* fat ban.



Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils President Robert Reeves says that some replacement oils may be in short supply as more bans against *trans* fat take effect.

Association. "There are consequences to a 16- to 18-month deadline. For alternatives, we have to plant, grow, and harvest to test for restaurants to make sure it works with the recipes."

Corn oils and palm oils are widely available as a potential replacement, said Robert Reeves, president of the Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils, a trade group for the refiners of edible fats and oils. However other potential replacements for *trans* fats such as cotton seed, peanut, sunflower, and even certain soybean and canola oils will be in short supply when bans take effect, Reeves said.

Several chain restaurants, including Dunkin' Donuts, KFC, McDonald's, Olive Garden, Taco Bell and Wendy's have begun the process of reducing or eliminating *trans* fats from their foods. Actions already taken by the industry eliminate the need for a government mandate, Shott said.

But government action proved necessary in New York City: In June 2005, New York encouraged restaurants to voluntarily drop *trans* fats as part of an educa-

port in many states. The Massachusetts ban was proposed by a Democrat, while in California, a Republican lawmaker took the lead. The New York City ban was pushed by Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

The restaurant industry says the July 2008 deadline, which New York City has implemented and Connecticut is considering, poses a burden.

"We are not disputing the health of *trans* fats, and many restaurants are already moving away from *trans* fats," said Chrissy Shott, spokeswoman for the National Restaurant

tional outreach program, said Erica Lessem, spokeswoman for the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The notice sent to restaurants after the adoption of the new rule last December stated that "use (of *trans* fats) remained common and has not declined substantially, despite the *trans* Fat Education Campaign."

Some of the larger chain restaurants deserve credit for eliminating unhealthy fats, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), a Washington, D.C.-based health advocacy group. Despite that, the center said that two of the biggest chains—McDonalds and Burger King—and many medium-sized chains have made little progress in switching to healthier oils.

"When *trans* fats labeling went into effect in the supermarket, large food manufacturers competed against each other to see who could get rid of artificial *trans* fat the fastest," said Michael F. Jacobson, the executive director of the CSPI in a year-end statement. "But restaurants didn't have labeling as an incentive to change so they've needed other incentives: a lawsuit here, a municipal phase-out proposal there."

trans fats are formed when hydrogen is added to solidify liquid vegetable oil. Health experts say it raises bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol. Most Americans consume about 4.7 pounds of *trans* fats per year, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The American Heart Association recommends eating less than 1.6 pounds per year based on the average 2,000 calorie-per-day diet.

Elimination of *trans* fats would reduce coronary heart disease—the primary cause of the nation's 1.2 million heart attacks that occur every year—by 19 percent, according to the New England Journal of Medicine.

A Harvard University report titled "*trans* Fatty Acids and Coronary Heart Disease," estimated that one in five heart attacks in the United States are caused by eating *trans* fats.

"There is an overwhelming amount of evidence out there revealing just how damaging *trans* fats are," said Massachusetts state Rep. Peter Koutoujian, the Democratic House chairman of the Joint Committee on Public Health, in a statement last December. "We have

the opportunity to vastly improve public health by directing restaurants to switch to healthier alternatives that will make food dramatically healthier.”

U.S. restaurants use 13.7 million pounds of *trans* fats per day, according to the National Restaurant Association. The popularity is partly a result of how inexpensive *trans* fats are, compared to healthier alternatives. *trans* fats cost 31.5 cents per pound compared to 60 cents per pound for healthier alternatives, according to Forbes magazine.

Prior to filing a bill to ban *trans* fat, California Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia (R) traveled to New York City to meet with health officials there to learn more about the issue.








“As part of our efforts to address obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, it’s time California look at the impact *trans* fats have on our lives,” Garcia said in a Dec. 18 statement when the bill was introduced last year. “With this bill as a starting point, we’ll be able to bring all of the interested groups together to discuss how best to implement this legislation and improve the health of Californians.”

Several cities, including Boston, Buffalo, N.Y., Chicago, Cleveland, Louisville, Ky., and Philadelphia are also considering municipal bans. But Ohio, Illinois, and Kentucky have yet to propose statewide bans.

By Fred Lucas, Special to Stateline.org. Fred Lucas is a reporter for Cybercast News Service in Alexandria, Va. He previously covered the Connecticut and Kentucky statehouses. ■

WANTED: A GOOD STORY

If you have any of the following, we want to publish it:

-  Oilseed processing news
-  Company press release
-  News of a job promotion or change
-  Interesting oilseed-processing-related photos
-  Notice of upcoming meeting
-  Article idea
-  Even an oil mill anecdote, joke, or cartoon

Please email your contribution to: gazetteer@iomsa.org

or by mail to:
Oil Mill Gazetteer
P.O. Box 17190
Urbana, IL 61803-7190

International
 Oil Mill
 Superintendents
 Association



MSA Booster Club

www.iomsa.org

Supporting the Association Serving Our Industry

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| AC Horn/Cantrell International | Crown Iron Works Company | Insulation & Refractories Services | N. Hunt Moore & Associates |
| Bliss Industries | Design Corrugating | Interstates Construction Services | Oil Dri |
| Breitenbach, Inc. | DeSmet Process & Tech Inc. | Kice Industries, Inc. | Plant Maintenance Service Corp. |
| Buhler Inc | Divine Engineering Inc. | Laidig Systems, Inc | Roskamp Champion |
| Bussco, Inc | Electrical Engineering & Equipment | LFC North America | Steamgard, LLC |
| C.A. Picard International | Fell and Company International | M & W Contractors Inc. | Sullivan Sales & Service |
| Cognis Corporate | French Oil Mill Machinery Co | Mid-South Industrial, Inc. | The Essmueller Company |
| Continental Eagle Corp | Industrial Filter & Pump Mfg. | | Tramco |
| Creason Corrugating Company | | | Veg-Oil Seed Consultants |

For information about the Oil Miller’s Booster Club or to join the Booster Club contact:
 Mark Kessler • 8711 Taunton Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078 • Phone: 704-904-9672 • Fax: 704-947-0370 • e-mail: markkessler@laidig.com

www.iomsa.org