



THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP

Assistant Minister for Health and Ageing

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Australia-New Zealand Collaboration on Transfats launched

Opening the inaugural meeting of the Australia New Zealand Collaboration on Transfats today the Assistant Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne, said that this was an important public health initiative.

“Last October, I announced the fact that Food Standards Australia New Zealand, the National Heart Foundation, the Dietitians Association of Australia and the Australian Food and Grocery Council had got together to form this collaboration with the important role of reducing damaging transfats in the food supply,” Mr Pyne said.

“I am also pleased to see that the collaboration has now become a trans-Tasman initiative. This is particularly important as Australia and New Zealand are increasingly becoming a single market for food manufacturing.

“There is a scientific link between the consumption of transfats and heart disease. Transfats not only increase bad cholesterol in our blood, a key indicator for heart disease, they may also decrease good cholesterol.

“This collaboration is chaired by Food Standards Australia New Zealand, which is conducting a formal scientific review of transfats in the food supply. It will be reporting back to the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council, which I chair, by May this year.

“As part of the review, Food Standards Australia New Zealand has worked with the NSW Food Authority, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and South Australia Health Department to survey the amount of transfats consumed in Australia and New Zealand, and the results are interesting.

“Australians obtain only 0.6 per cent of their daily kilojoules from transfats and New Zealanders only 0.7 per cent. This is well below the World Health Organization recommendation to consume no more than 1 per cent of your daily kilojoules from transfats and well below many other countries.

“Consumers can reduce these intakes even further by following healthy eating guidelines: that is, to reduce overall consumption of all fats and limit consumption of transfats and saturated fats.

“One of the reasons we consume less trans fats than other countries could be due to the excellent collaborative work already carried out over the last decade or so between organisations like the National Heart Foundation, the Dietitians Association of Australia and the food industry to encourage the use of healthier fats.

“While looking at the trans fats issue we have no wish to undo much of this good work, for example, by manufacturers and retailers returning to use saturated fats such as palm oil, tallow or lard.

“Already I have seen reports in the media where a food outlet states it is telling consumers that they had gone ‘trans fat free’ when, in fact, it is using palm oil, which is high in saturated fat. I’ve also seen claims that butter is ‘virtually trans fat free’ when it, too, is high in saturated fats.

“While we are consuming levels of trans fats well below the WHO recommendation, we are eating above the WHO recommended levels of saturated fats.

“We urgently need to reduce our saturated fats intake, too, and remember that total fats and saturated fats are already listed on food labels in the nutrition information panel.

“I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this collaboration, especially in what you recommend to further reducing trans fats in our food supply in the context of a balanced diet,” Mr Pyne said.

The collaboration is due to report on progress to Mr Pyne in the first quarter of 2007. A fact sheet on trans fats can be found on the Food Standards Australia New Zealand web site at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/factsheets/factsheets2006/transfattyacids24oct3388.cfm>

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