

## UNILEVER'S GLOBAL POSITION ON SATURATED FAT REDUCTION

### Key messages

- Worldwide dietary guidelines generally recommend limiting saturated fat intake to a maximum of 10% of daily energy, and to replace saturated fat with unsaturated fat.
- In Unilever products, saturated fats can be found in limited quantities in our ice creams and in some of our savoury and bakery products.
- Saturated fats provide texture, structure and taste, it therefore is a technical challenge to replace solid saturated fats with liquid unsaturated fats.
- Through Unilever's 'Future Foods' ambition and its Highest Nutrition Standards, Unilever continues to drive down key nutrients of concern (saturated fat, salt, sugar and calories).

### Background

Fats and oils are essential for good nutrition. They provide energy, help the body absorb certain nutrients, have an important role in essential body functions, and make foods tastier. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), between 20% and 35% of our energy intake should come from fats.

Not all fats are the same and some fats are better for your health than others. Too much saturated fat can increase the 'bad' LDL cholesterol in blood, which can, in turn, increase the risk of coronary heart disease. In most developed countries saturated fat intakes are higher than recommended. Reducing saturated fat intake is therefore a major focus of most international dietary recommendations. Most recommendations have set an upper limit of 10% of daily energy intake (20-



30g/day) for total saturated fat intake. In addition, most guidelines emphasize that for the prevention of coronary heart disease, saturated fats should be replaced with the good unsaturated fats.

However, there are conflicting messages in the media on whether to reduce saturated fats or not, and whether saturated fats from dairy, meat or vegetable sources have the same impact on our health.

Most fats and oils sources contain both saturated and unsaturated fats in different proportions. Saturated fats are present in higher proportions in animal fats, such as butter and lard, than in vegetable oils, such as sunflower, rapeseed or olive oil. Some plant foods, such as palm and coconut oils and their products, palm kernel oil, coconut milk and coconut cream, also contain high levels of saturated fats. As a general rule of thumb, fats and oils with high levels of saturated fats are solid at room temperature.

### **Context**

Saturated fats provide texture, structure and taste to a wide range of foods, for example butter, lard, pastries, (ice) cream, pies and cheese. Saturated fats therefore play an important role in the enjoyment and pleasure of the product for the consumer.

Because saturated fats are solid at room temperature it is not always possible to simply replace these fats by unsaturated fats which are liquid at room temperature, without affecting the functional properties of foods.

In Unilever products, saturated fats can be found in limited quantities in our ice creams and in some of our savoury and bakery products.

### **Unilever's position**

We support the dietary recommendations of international health authorities to limit saturated fat consumption in the diet to a maximum of 10% of total energy





intake and to replace saturated fats, which are found mostly in dairy and meat products, with (poly)unsaturated fats, which are found in nuts, seeds, fish and liquid vegetable oils.

While some specific saturated fatty acids may raise blood cholesterol levels more than others, most international health authorities recommend replacing saturated fats as a whole group with polyunsaturated fats. This is based on the evidence of the impact of such dietary replacements on overall heart health (and not only on blood cholesterol levels) and the need to apply a pragmatic approach towards dietary change.

### **Unilever's commitment**

As part of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, we committed in 2010 to double the proportion of our portfolio that meets the Unilever Highest Nutritional Standards (HNS) by 2020. These HNS are based on globally recognised dietary recommendations and include product group benchmarks for key nutrients of concern and drive reformulation. This target was reached by end of 2020.

In 2020 Unilever set a new bold 'Future Foods' ambition to help people transition towards healthier diets and to help reduce the environmental impact of the global food chain. This ambition continues to drive down key nutrients of concern and double the number of products delivering positive nutrition globally by 2025. For a product to be HNS compliant, it must meet all the standards defined for each product group. Standards include saturated fat, trans fat, salt, sugar and calories.

For more information on Unilever's Future Foods ambition visit [Positive nutrition | Unilever](#).

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