

Woolworth S. Africa to cut out trans fats

Woolworths South Africa has announced that they're targeting to be the first South African food retailer to remove hydrogenated vegetable oils (HVOs) or trans fats from their entire Woolworth brand products.

Woolworths South Africa has announced that they're targeting to be the first South African food retailer to remove hydrogenated vegetable oils (HVOs) or trans fats from their entire Woolworth brand products.

They have already completed the first phase, removing trans fats from their pies, pizzas, soups, sauces, ready-meals and party snacks.

Trans fats is created by the passing of hydrogen through vegetable oil and is used in food items to impart a favourable texture and taste as well as extend shelf life. However, recent studies have found that trans fats raise LDL 'bad' cholesterol levels in blood, while reducing HDL 'good' cholesterol levels, which increases the risk of stroke and heart disease.

Cecil Mitchell, Head of Food Technology at Woolworths said, "When the trans fat issue emerged in 2003, Woolworths embarked upon a two-pronged approach to address the issue. In line with our Good Food Journey, we invested over R1 million in lab equipment to allow us to include the fatty acid profile on our nutritional information labelling so that our customers could make informed choices," Mitchell says. "We also began replacing HVOs with fats and oils that, in addition to containing no artificial colourants, have better fatty acid profiles."

"It's very important for us to ensure that we offer our customers foods that not only taste delicious, but that's better for their health. For example, we were the first South African food retailer to remove 'added' MSG and tartrazine from our foods. The removal of HVOs represents another milestone on our Good Food Journey," says Woolworths Head of Foods, Julian Novak.

He adds, "We are committed not only to offering our customers a wide range of top-quality, delicious food choices, but to promoting healthy eating as part of a healthy lifestyle."

Food manufacturers and restaurants worldwide have made the switch from trans fats to unsaturated palm oil, a healthier oil rich in antioxidants and vitamins such as CoQ10 and tocotrienols. New York City became the first city in the United States last year to ban trans fats from restaurants and other states have or are considering a similar move. THE END.