

Diet, Nutrition and Health Care Costs in Canada

A Call for Action

The **Vegetable Oil Industry of Canada (VOIC)**, representing growers, processors and makers of vegetable oil-based food products, are calling for **urgent action** at both the **federal and provincial government levels** to combat the incidence of preventable, diet-related chronic disease.

Specifically, we are calling for:

- **Reform of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating** to better acknowledge the body's need for essential fat and the sources of these fats: vegetable oil containing polyunsaturates and mono-unsaturates which lower the risk of coronary heart disease;
- **Immediate removal of interprovincial barriers** that restrict availability of healthful alternatives to high-in-saturated-fat foods.



Alberta Canola

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) alone costs Canadians \$18.5 billion, including \$6.8 billion in direct costs and \$11.7 billion in indirect costs per year.¹

(Health Canada)

The principal unhealthy dietary practices associated with CVD include the high consumption of saturated fats, salt and refined carbohydrates, as well as low consumption of fruits and vegetables.²

(World Health Organization)

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated acids reduce blood cholesterol concentrations and help lower the risk of heart disease when they replace saturated fatty acids in the diet.³

(National Academy of Sciences)

The replacement of saturated and trans fatty acids by polyunsaturated vegetable oils lowers coronary heart disease risk.⁴

(World Health Organization)

**Vegetable Oil
Industry of
Canada (VOIC)**

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Diet, Nutrition and Health in the News

Fat Linked to Breast Cancer

(Globe & Mail July 16, 2003)

Scaling back our diet: Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating may be steering us in the wrong direction

(National Post September 23, 2003)

Canada is narrowing the obesity gap with U.S.

(National Post September 26, 2003)

Don't eat yourself to death Animal fats contribute to risk Eat more fruits and vegetables

(Toronto Star October 2, 2003)

High Dairy Intake Linked to Testicular Cancer Risk

(Reuters UK October 13, 2003)

Diabetes in Canada could skyrocket. Fat, not sugar, now considered prime culprit

(Globe & Mail October 18, 2003)

Teen heart disease coming: expert obesity doctor warns fat will soon overtake tobacco as a killer

(National Post October 24, 2003)

Protect yourself: trans fats hidden in many products

(Saskatoon Star Phoenix October 29, 2003)

Diet and Disease

In April of 2003, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) published an expert report containing the “best currently available scientific evidence on the relationship of diet, nutrition and physical activity to chronic diseases.” (FAO/WHO April 23, 2003 news release)

The report notes that one half of the world-wide incidence of death due to chronic diseases related to diet and nutrition are attributable to cardiovascular diseases (CVD). “... obesity and diabetes are also showing worrying trends, not only because they affect a large proportion of the population, but also because they have started to appear earlier in life.”⁵



Polyunsaturated fatty acids are found in vegetable oil

Diet-Related Disease and Health Care Costs

According to the report, these diet-related chronic diseases present the greatest health burden, “either in terms of direct costs to society and government or in terms of disability-adjusted life years.”⁶ In Canada, heart disease is the number one killer with 80 per cent of Canadians having one major risk factor, nearly one third has two risk factors; and another 11 per cent has three or more risk factors.⁷

According to Health Canada, cardiovascular disease alone costs Canadians \$18.5 billion, including \$6.8 billion in direct costs and \$11.7 billion in indirect costs per year.⁸ The Department advises that this population is advised to seek controlled intakes of energy, total fat and types of fat.⁹

“...the consequences of poor dietary habits are significant, not only for individual Canadians' health, but also for the welfare of the health system itself.... The economic burden of a poor diet alone is estimated to be \$6.3 billion annually in Canada, including direct health care costs of \$1.8 billion.”
- Minister of Health, the Honourable Anne McLellan

Replace Saturated and Trans Fat with Vegetable Oils

Health Canada notes that the food choices of many Canadians result in inadequate amounts of some essential nutrients and excess amounts of energy (calories), fat and saturated fat.¹⁰ As noted by the WHO, the principal unhealthy dietary practices associated with CVD include the high consumption of saturated fats, salt and refined carbohydrates, as well as low consumption of fruits and vegetables.¹¹

Saturated fatty acids raise total and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol.... (the) replacement of saturated and trans fatty acids by polyunsaturated vegetable oils lowered coronary heart disease risk.¹²

In addition, “the most dramatic increases in type 2 diabetes are occurring in societies in which there have been major changes in type of diet consumed, reductions in physical activity, and increases in overweight and obesity. The diets concerned are typically energy dense, high in saturated fatty acids and depleted in non-starch polysaccharides (dietary fibre).”¹³ Type 2 diabetes is a condition that afflicts 1.35 million Canadians with an additional 675,000 having the disease but not yet diagnosed.^{14,15}

Reforming Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Members of VOIC are actively participating in the current review and updating of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating to reflect current research, emerging scientific opinion and changing demographics in Canada. Together with the United States and the Institute of Medicine, Canada has been involved in developing and adopting dietary reference intakes (DRIs) for most vitamins, minerals and macronutrients.

According to Health Canada, the dietary reference intakes "... reflect the current state of scientific knowledge with respect to nutrient requirements. The ONPP (Office of Nutrition Policy) will be using the DRIs to ensure that dietary guidance to Canadians is scientifically sound."

DRIs for Fat



The DRI report for fat states: "Fat is a major source of fuel energy for the body and aids in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and other food components..."¹⁶ The report recommends that fat provide between 20% and 35% of total energy intake, and that two essential fats, alpha-linolenic acid and linoleic acid should be consumed in the amount of 1.6 and 17 grams per day respectively. Both of these essential fats are found predominantly in polyunsaturated fats such as vegetable oils, which are not recommended in the current version of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

The report notes that saturated fat, trans fatty acids and cholesterol raise blood cholesterol concentrations and therefore increase the risk of coronary heart disease.¹⁷ To minimize intake of these fats, the report recommends "decreased intakes of animal fats (e.g., meat fat and butter fat)" and decreasing the serving size and frequency of intake of foods containing trans fatty acids.¹⁸

VOIC Recommendations for Food Guide Reform

Currently, two of the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide promote foods that are primarily animal-based (meat and alternatives; dairy products), and hence are sources of saturated fat. Members of VOIC have called upon Health Canada to revise Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating to better acknowledge the body's need for essential fat and the sources of these fats: vegetable oil containing polyunsaturates and mono-unsaturates which lower the risk of coronary heart disease.

"VOIC has recommended the addition of a new category to the Guide identifying typical vegetable oil products that contain these essential fats: plant oils including canola, soy, sunflower, corn, peanut and other vegetable oils; margarine; mayonnaise; salad dressing, etc."

VOIC has recommended the addition of a new category to the Guide identifying typical vegetable oil products that contain these essential fats: plant oils including canola, soy, sunflower, corn, peanut and other vegetable oils; margarine; mayonnaise; salad dressing, etc. In addition, VOIC has recommended that the "Milk Products" category should be expanded to the "Milk Products and Foods High in Calcium" category. This category should include alternate food sources for calcium including: fortified margarine (a product that should be available); sardines; and canned salmon.

Removing Interprovincial Barriers to Healthy Eating

In 1994, the Federal government and the provinces signed the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) to eliminate barriers to the free flow of goods and services within Canada. It was recognized that, while Canada had entered into a new era of international free trade first under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and then the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization, differing provincial regulations in a number of sectors inhibit internal free trade and need to be addressed.

Under Chapter Nine of the AIT, the agriculture chapter, specific commitments were made under Article 902.3 regarding margarine colouring restrictions, other margarine standards and standards regarding dairy blends and imitation dairy products. Six years later these barriers to the internal free trade of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated alternatives to dairy products have yet to be addressed.

The failure of Canadian Agriculture Ministers, with the exception of Alberta and Newfoundland, to make good on these obligations under the AIT is not only causing ongoing economic injury to the vegetable oil industry of Canada, it restricts consumer choice and deprives Canadians of product innovations low in saturated fat that would improve their health.

VOIC Call for Elimination of Barriers

In an April 2003 letter to the federal Industry Minister, the federal Agriculture Minister wrote:

“Federal and provincial agriculture ministers have re-affirmed that the objective of liberalizing internal trade is very important and widely supported in the agriculture and food industry.”

The Vegetable Oil Industry of Canada is calling upon Premiers and Ministers of Agriculture to immediately implement Article 902.3 to remove interprovincial barriers to consumer choice and healthy eating in Canada.



Western Canola Farm

Spreading in Finland

A study in Finland demonstrates the significance of changes in spreading habits from high to low-in-saturated fat products and the impact on the rate of death due to coronary heart disease. In 1972, 90 per cent of those studied used butter on bread and the corresponding rate of death from coronary heart disease was 671 persons per 100,000. In 1992, 20 per cent used butter, with the majority using low-fat spreads, margarine and blends (mixtures of butter and margarine) with a corresponding rate of death from coronary heart disease of 324 per 100,000, a decline of more than 50 per cent.

Status of AIT Compliance

Alberta

The provisions of the *Dairy Industry Act* of Alberta been repealed and the province complies with the Agreement on Internal Trade.

British Columbia

B.C.'s *Milk Industry Act* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Manitoba

Manitoba's *Dairy Act* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick's *Natural Products Act* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Newfoundland

Newfoundland complies with the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's *Imitation Dairy Products Act* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Ontario

Ontario's *Edible Oil Products Act* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Prince Edward Island

The Province's *Dairy Industry Act* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Quebec

Quebec's *Regulation Respecting Dairy Products Substitutes* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's *Dairy Manufacture Plant Regulations* remains in violation of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

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3. Institute of Medicine. September 2002. *Shaping the Future for Health*. p 4.
4. FAO/WHO (Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization). 2002. *Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases*, WHO Technical Report Series; 916. Geneva. p 82.
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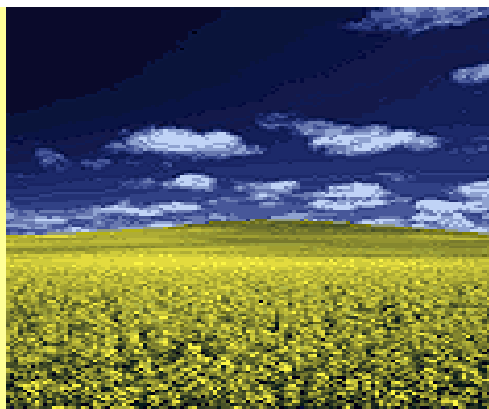
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13. FAO/WHO (Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization). 2002. *Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases*, WHO Technical Report Series; 916. Geneva. p 73.
14. WHO. April 2002. *Diabetes Mellitus, Fact Sheet No. 138*. p 1.
15. Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement. May 15, 2001. p 11. (Note: Health Canada estimates that 1.5 million Canadians have diabetes mellitus with another 750,000 not yet diagnosed. The World Health Organization estimates that 90 per cent of all persons with diabetes have type-2 diabetes.)
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17. Institute of Medicine. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrates, Fibre, Fat, Protein and Amino Acids (Macronutrients) (2002)*. p 11-46.
18. Institute of Medicine. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrates, Fibre, Fat, Protein and Amino Acids (Macronutrients) (2002)*. p 11-46.

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